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Over picture

A detail from one of the plates in Helen Levitt's *A Way of Seeing*, the catalogue of the first exhibition of her photographs, which took place at the Museum of Modern Art in 1965; it has been recently reprinted with an additional twenty-five photographs (88pp, New York: Horizon Press; distributed by Duke University Press, £26.15, 0 8223 07333 2).

Other modes of thought

Keith Thomas

ROY PORTER

Mind-For'd Manacles: A history of madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency

412pp. A thence. £25.

0 485 11324 4

A Social History of Madness: Stories of the insane

261pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.

0 297 79223 7

The excellent bibliographies appended to Roy Porter's two new books give some idea of the amount of attention given during the past few decades to the history of madness and its treatment. The appeal of this subject is not difficult to fathom. In the 1960s the hostile picture of institutional psychiatry was painted by critics like R. D. Laing, Erving Goffman and Thomas Szasz. Their polemics attracted the interest of radically minded historians anxious to expose the forms of cultural hegemony and control by which those in power subordinated and disciplined those who did not conform to the system. Michel Foucault's *Folie et déraison* (1961) seemed to support the view that the confinement of the insane and the "invention" of mental illness were essentially new forms of social oppression. Marxists linked the spread of the asylum in the nineteenth century to the traumas of industrialization. Feminists saw in the greater vulnerability of modern women to mental illness a further proof of the evils of patriarchy. The anthropologically minded regarded the concepts of normality and abnormality as culturally relative, changing to fit new mental assumptions and different social needs.

In *Mind-For'd Manacles* Dr Porter has attempted a general synthesis of the work which has been generated in response to this ferment of speculation. Medical history has flourished in recent years (not least because the Wellcome Foundation has generously funded research at a time when employment opportunities for those working on more conventional historical topics have been drying up), and Porter is able to draw upon a number of excellent empirical studies, though it is a pity that some of the best of them, like Michael MacDonald's *Mystical Bedlam* or William Parry Jones's *The Trade in Lunacy*, relate either to the beginning of his period or to the end. The eighteenth century itself has been relatively neglected. It was a century when Britain had a

mad king, several mad politicians, and a host of mad poets. But although there have been biographical studies of the more celebrated invalids and much writing on the literary manifestations of insanity and melancholia, relatively little has yet been found out about the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness among the population at large.

Enough, however, is known to enable Porter to give short shrift to some of the more outlandish interpretations of recent times. Foucault's notorious indifference to empirical evidence is further revealed by the demonstration that there was no "Great Confinement" in eighteenth-century England. Far from there being a

real presence in the popular mind long before psychiatry split independent professional expertise. He similarly rejects the Marxist notion of a connection between madness and industrialization: it was not in the industrial areas that the asylums were primarily located. Nor can a crude feminist interpretation be sustained, for male admissions to asylums outnumbered female, though the pattern was to be reversed after the mid-nineteenth century.

Yet though Porter rejects the more strident assertions of yesterday's radical thought, his work has inevitably been much influenced by it. He has no sympathy with the whiggish way of writing medical history as if it were the story

relative. "Even the mad are men of their times."

Of course, madness is not just a matter of cultural fashion. Depression and schizophrenia can have a biochemical basis. Mental illness is as much a fact as smallpox or plague. But it is also, as Porter observes, a socially constructed fact. Its physical basis may be constant, but its external symptoms and the interpretation of those symptoms will vary according to the cultural assumptions of the time. To that extent, the history of madness should be located half-way between the history of smallpox or plague on the one hand and of witchcraft on the other.

Porter's approach to the history of madness is what might be called a hermeneutic one. He seeks to recover past meanings by examining the ways in which concepts of madness were culturally determined and expressed. Moreover, he regards psychiatry itself as no less a cultural construct than madness. For most of the eighteenth century insanity was in the care of no single professional group. It was a time of experiment and diversity. It was the latter part of the century that saw the emergence of a small cadre of specialist mad-doctors, living at close quarters with their patients in private mad-houses, and, through their close familiarity with the symptoms of insanity, generating new hypotheses about the nature of madness and its proper treatment. The intimate dialogue between doctor and patient fascinates Porter, who regards early psychiatry with some scepticism and quotes with approval the observation of John Perceval, the mad son of the assassinated Prime Minister, that "the world, in their treatment of lunatics, are as insane as the lunatic himself". In his *Social History of Madness*, he is scathingly ironic about Freud's phallicentric vision of the human psyche. Such "putrid church psychiatry" is revealed as no less bizarre than the wildest delusions of an eighteenth-century mudman.

Hostile, therefore, to what he calls "the sterile antithesis of reason and unreason", Porter surveys the tragedy and comedy of eighteenth-century madness in *Mind-For'd Manacles* with neutral detachment. His account is rather breathless and not always well digested. The text bears evident signs of haste and the reader is not surprised to learn that Porter's wife "worked like crazy" to get it ready for the printer. Although the book is crammed with information, a surprisingly large number of facts and quotations are taken at second hand; and it is disappointing that the author had no



Squire John Mylton, whose eccentricities included duck-shooting in midwinter dressed only in a nightgown, also indulged in bear-back-riding in the drawing-room. The picture is taken from *The Mad Hatters: Great sporting eccentricities of the nineteenth century* by Douglas Sutherland (208pp, Hale, £12.95, 0 7090 31580 0).

drive by the government to lock up the mad poor, the number of those confined in 1800 was only a few thousand; moreover, they had been put there by their friends and relations, rather than by the State, and they were as likely to be from well-to-do families as from the poor. "We are not dealing - at least not before the nineteenth century", Porter reminds us, "with the management of madness primarily as medical policing, hegemonic social control, or as an agent for drilling the masses for industrialism."

The anti-psychiatrists fare little better than do the followers of Foucault. The idea of mental illness, Porter points out, was not invented by the psychiatric profession: "insanity was a

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time in which to conduct more research into the unpublished records of the period. Nevertheless, he has read voraciously and he writes with gusto, vivacity and a rich sense of humour. He likens the mad King George III visited by his blind ex-Prime Minister Lord North, to Lord and Gloucester on Dover beach; and he compares the celebrated royal doctor Francis Willis to a lion-tamer who could fix an animal with his eye. What, asked Burke, made Willis so sure that he could control the King?

"Place the candles between us, Mr Burke," replied the Doctor in an equally authoritative tone: "and I'll give you an answer. There, Sir, is the EYE! I should have looked at him then, Sir - that!"

Burke instantaneously averted his head, and, making no reply, evidently acknowledged this brilliant analogy.

Mind-Forg'd Manacles brings out very clearly the ways in which thinking about madness changed during the course of the eighteenth century. The causes of insanity had long been regarded as essentially physical. But the old humoral theory yielded under the influence of Thomas Willis's neuroanatomy to an explanation based on the functioning of the brain and the nervous system. Talk of the spleen, the vapours and the liver gave way to the new vogue for 'nervous' complaints. This was the fashionable diagnosis, caricatured by Smollett in *Sir Launcelot Greaves*:

"Doctor, (said one here) if it is not an improper question to ask, I should be glad to know your opinion of my disorder - " "Oh Sir, as in that - (replied the physician) your disorder is a - kind of a - sir, 'tis very common in this country - a sort of a - " "Do you think my disorder is a madness doctor?" - "O Lord! sir - not absolute madness - no - not madness - you have heard, no doubt, of what is called a weakness of the nerves, sir

This kind of nervous illness for a time became a symbol of superior sensibilities. It was seen as a disease of civilization, the price humanity had to pay for social progress. By the 1840s the author of a guide to Harrogate could observe with complacency that "nervous ailments are

not confined to the higher classes but are spreading rapidly with the extension of knowledge and luxury among the power classes".

In the eighteenth century madness was de-mythified and secularized. Religious insanity and diabolical possession were reinterpreted as organic disease. Secularist enthusiasm of the kind which had been common during the Interregnum was denounced as pathological. In 1739 the revivalist George Whitefield rescued from Bedlam a young man named Joseph Periam who had been put there for being, "as they term it, Methodically mad". The proofs of his insanity were: "1. That he fasted for near a fortnight. 2. That he prayed so as to be heard four stories high. 3. That he had sold his clothes and given them to the poor." "One half of the Christian world", reflected William Cowper in 1766 on his new-found Evangelical faith, "would call this madness, fanaticism and folly; but are not these things warranted by the word of God?"

During the century the tendency was to move towards a sharper distinction between the mad and the sane. In earlier periods, madness had been regarded as a hazard to which all human beings were subject. Human imperfection was a product of the Fall and full psychic health was conceivable only in Paradise. Man's unruly passions could capture the reason at any moment if control was relaxed. There was no sense of a great divide between two distinct classes of people; and those whose reason was disturbed could usually circulate freely in society provided they were not positively dangerous. But the rise of a specialist corps of psychiatric doctors and the gradual move inwards the confinement of the insane, whether dangerous or not, reflected the growing conception of the mad as a distinctive subsection of humanity. In the prevailing Lockean theory, madness was not the triumph of appetite over reason but a failure of reason itself. This doctrine held out the possibility that delusions could be cured, but it also encouraged a sharper demarcation between the mad and the sane. The process resembled the parallel transformation in the idea of homosexuality, from seeing it as a temptation to which all were subject, to regarding it as the defining attribute

of a particular class of men and women.

With the increasing separation of the mad and of those who treated them it became possible to regard society itself as rational, normal and sane. The rationality of the elite was superior to that of the populace and there was no room for those who departed from accepted standards of normality. Even poets were rescued from the taint of madness when it came to be held that what made them special was not their divine frenzy but their superior judgment. In Charles Lamb's words, "it is impossible for the mind to conceive a mad Shakespeare". Meanwhile the stigmatization and exclusion of the insane became a self-confirming process. "Place a person in a mad-house," writes Porter, "deprive him of normal contact, chain him up, and (above all) treat him as though he were beyond communication, and you create a madman, a monster after your own imagination." As William Belcher observed in 1796, after he had been wrongfully locked up in a private asylum at Hackney, "the trade in lunacy" was "an approved receipt to make a lunatic".

The often pathetic writings of the supposed lunatics themselves provide Porter with one of his most interesting chapters in *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*; and they form the subject-matter of his *Social History of Madness*, a work whose nature is better conveyed by its subtitle, *Stories of the Insane*. It is an anecdotal book devoted to the writings of insane persons, mostly over the past two or three hundred years, in Europe and the United States as well as in Britain. Its guiding principle is that these outpourings are in their way coherent utterances, just as capable of historical interpretation as the writings of the sane. Separate chapters are devoted to the main themes which these works exemplify: delusions of grandeur; creative madness akin to genius; religious madness; and female madness. Many of the writings discussed have already been printed in Dale Peterson's *A Mad People's History of Madness* (1983). Others will be familiar to readers of Hunter and Macalpine's *Three Hundred Years of Psychiatry* (1963). The persons discussed range from the medieval mystic Margery Kempe and the eighteenth-century concordance-maker Alex-

ander Cruden to Nietzsche and Nijinsky, so a common theme can hardly be expected to emerge. But we are treated to some vivid vignettes and some extraordinary stories. Few readers will quickly forget James Tilley Matthews, the London tea-merchant, who, seduced by the doctrines of Mesmerism, became convinced of the existence of a French plot to infiltrate the land with "magnetic spies", armed with machines for transmitting waves of animal magnetism. Committed to Bedlam in 1797, after he had denounced Lord Liverpool as a party to the conspiracy, Matthews whiled away his time making architectural plans for what would eventually become the Imperial War Museum.

The exploration of alien modes of thought is the essence of the historian's task and Porter is to be congratulated on doing so much to bring the problems involved in the history of madness to general attention. Further progress with this elusive subject will require attention to two essential tasks. The first is to compile a thorough lexicon of the vocabulary used at any particular period for describing abnormalities of mind and behaviour. "Madness" is a vague concept and much more semantic investigation is needed if we are to have an adequate understanding of popular attitudes and perceptions. Michael MacDonald's *Mystical Bedlam* gives some idea of what can be done along these lines for the early seventeenth century.

The second task is to ascertain just what in any particular time or place constitutes "sanity". Roy Porter tells us that in the early nineteenth century a Home Counties farmer was locked up as mad because he had paid his labourers more than the going rate; and he reports the case of "Barbara O'Brien" (the pseudonym of a modern American business woman), who was told by her analyst that the cause of her problems was "an inadequate sex life": a woman of her age, the consultant informed her, ought to have had at least "one hundred and twenty-five affairs". Such occurrences remind us just how protean is the psychiatric doctrine that patients should "face up to reality". What calls out for explanation is not just the history of madness, but also the concept of normality.

Between dogma and common sense

Adrian Wooldridge

MICHAEL SANDERSON
Educational Opportunity and Social Change in England
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65pp. Institute of Education, £4.50.
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Anti-Racist Science Teaching
234pp. Free Association Books, £8.95.
0946960 63 t

Unlikely educational reform in Great Britain was almost a Labour Party monopoly. The major innovations of the six decades between 1918 and 1979 - secondary education for all, the raising of the school-leaving age, the abolition of the 11-plus, the expansion of higher education - were either inspired or implemented by the left. The Conservative Party disregarded educational problems - or at least state educational problems - and resisted change in the field. Suddenly, however, it has seized the initiative and turned itself into the party of innovation.

This is undoubtedly a shrewd manoeuvre. The public is increasingly convinced that the established system has failed to promote productivity or inculcate politeness. Forty per cent of children leave school with no qualifications, their prospects negligible. Inner-city schools have disturbingly high levels of truancy and violence.

Perhaps the most serious weakness of British education is its under-emphasis on science. Teachers' pay is too low to recruit and retain talented science graduates. In 1986 a quarter of mathematics teachers and a third of physics teachers in state schools lacked appropriate qualifications. Inept teaching discourages children from taking an interest in

science and leads to long-term shortages of qualified scientists. Despite unprecedented general unemployment, industry is starved of scientifically trained manpower. And poor science teaching frustrates admirable government initiatives. In 1985 an extra £143 million was earmarked in order to finance 4,000 new university and polytechnic places in engineering and technology - but at the same time there were already 1,100 unfilled places in science and technology (including 408 places in engineering and computing). Unless more schoolchildren receive an adequate grounding in science, university reforms will fail.

British educational problems are dramatically demonstrated in comparison with other advanced nations. Eighty-two per cent of British children leave school at sixteen as compared with 4 per cent in Japan and about 10 per cent in Germany and the United States. In 1980, 50 per cent of German school-leavers took up apprenticeships compared with 14 per cent of British children. The pungent verdict of a former chairman of the Manpower Services Commission - that Britain's workforce is a "bunch of thickies" - is all too accurate. British children in the lower half of the ability range are as much as two years behind their German counterparts in mathematical skills. Between 1964 and 1981 - the era of comprehensive re-organization - English children fell from third to twenty-second place in an international league table of mathematical performance.

Since the turn of the century administrators have complained that workers are ill trained and ill motivated, that teachers refuse to respond to economic pressures, and that academics abuse the privileges of their profession. Expensive educational expansion has led to remarkably little social mobility: valuable human talent is constantly squandered. Government enthusiasm for technical education and vocational training has produced few results. Government initiatives have repeatedly been frustrated by vested interests and inherited prejudices.

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards the State began - albeit hesitantly - to turn education into an instrument of national power. It abolished a multitude of university securities; criticized the narrowness and irrelevance of the curriculum; and built the first few rungs of a ladder of educational opportunity. The pace of reform quickened at the end of Victoria's reign. Worried that Britain's economy was handicapped by antiquated institutions and outmoded attitudes, and hypnotized by the success of the German Reich, a number of reformers launched a campaign for national efficiency and educational reconstruction. They denigrated the dogmas of *laissez-faire* liberalism and regarded the State as the motor of national progress. By endowing scientific research, encouraging technical education and extending the provision of scholarships, they argued, the State would generate economic growth, sustain a vigorous population and recruit an enlightened elite.

Unfortunately, the national efficiency movement enjoyed only limited success. The educational system remained wasteful and hidebound. Numerous able working-class children failed to take up places in grammar schools (and many dull middle-class children received an unsuitable academic education). In the 1930s only 32 per cent of children with IQs of 140 or over from unskilled homes went on to grammar school - as compared with 96 per cent of equally able children from professional homes. Wastage was even more marked in the tertiary system. In the mid-1920s only one in a thousand elementary school children reached university. Moreover, the educational system was hardly calculated to contribute to economic growth. Secondary schools emphasized the humanities rather than the sciences, character rather than intellect, and gentleness rather than practical virtues. Teachers and pupils alike looked down on the sciences - or "stinks and brags" - and devoted themselves to dead languages. Goranwy Rec's verdict on the successful products of this system was

penetrating: "they had been well taught at school and what they understood they understood very well; what they did not understand included almost everything which would change the world in their lifetime."

The 1944 Education Act tried to solve many of these problems. It promised to educate children according to their "age, ability and aptitude" and planned to adjust education to the needs of industry. It recognized that children differed in their abilities - that some were fitted for an academic and others for a vocational education - but insisted that selection should reflect individual intellectual capacity rather than social background. A system stratified by ability was to replace one stratified by class.

Nothing of the sort happened. British education continued to be distorted by class bias and antediluvian prejudice. Educational expansion had little impact on the class composition of grammar schools or universities: middle-class children seized the new opportunities and working-class children generally ignored them. Inequalities of place compounded inequalities of class. The wide regional variation in the provision of grammar school places - 8 per cent of children went to grammar schools in Gwentshire compared with 60 per cent in Merioneth - meant that pass marks in the 11-plus exam varied widely. Inevitably, many bright children failed to gain the grammar school places they deserved. The grammar schools continued to model themselves on the public schools; the classics flourished while technical and vocational training languished.

Not surprisingly, the irritable system excited passionate hostility. Socialists exploited this hostility to popularize a radical restructuring of British education. Comprehensive schools, they argued, would promote both social justice and national efficiency, doing away with an inaccurate selection system, encouraging social solidarity, and uncovering buried talent. Yet comprehensives have done little, if anything, to achieve these ends. They have dramatically failed to promote social mobility

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MACMILLAN

A manifold challenge

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese

HARRIET A. JACOBS
Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself
Edited by Jean Fagan Yellin
306pp. Harvard University Press, £29.95 (paperback, £7.95).
0674 44745 X

"Slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women." In addition to the burdens that slavery imposed upon all, slave women endured "wrongs, and sufferings, and mortifications peculiarly their own". In *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Written by Herself, Harriet A. Jacobs chronicled those peculiar wrongs, and one slave woman's fierce resistance to them. First published in 1861, *Incidents* never enjoyed the broad circulation that its author and her friends had hoped for. By the time it appeared, the struggle which Jacobs sought to forward was irreversibly headed towards the battlefield. Thereafter, her text fell into obscurity and even those who knew of its existence leamed to believe that it had been written by its "editor", Lydia Maria Child, rather than by a slave woman herself. Indeed Jacobs, by publishing under the pseudonym, Linda Brent, may have contributed to the confusion - and she was certainly contributed by the idiom of white middle-class domestic fiction in which she wrote.

The present edition, an extraordinary labour of love and scholarship on the part of Jean Fagan Yellin, incontrovertibly establishes that Harriet A. Jacobs was born in slavery in Edenton, North Carolina, escaped to freedom, participated actively in the abolitionist movement, and wrote her own narrative. Yellin's historical detection is a marvel, and she has given us a definitive edition that, in addition to its learning, is a pleasure to read. Introduction, notes, and appendices document the essentials of

Jacobs's life and text. Yellin has, in short, been midwife to a woman's narrative that can stand beside those of Frederick Douglass, Solomon Northup and their brothers, as well as beside Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Frances Anne Kemble's *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation*. She has redeemed from nineteenth-century - let us face it - twentieth-century prejudices of class, race and especially, gender, the authentic voice of a former slave woman. That authentication, however, begins rather than closes the serious discussion of Jacobs's work which must henceforth figure in discussions of Afro-American, women's and American culture.

Incidents, although compelling to read, challenges all comfortable pieties about race and gender. Jacobs's disturbing story cannot uncritically be assimilated to the narratives of slave men or to the fictions of white women. Although Jacobs rhetorically invites the sympathies of both communities, she also distances herself from them. Her portraits of slave men emphasize the instinctive desire for freedom of some and the cowed submission of others. But whatever their feelings, she insists that they remain imprisoned by slavery and powerless to protect the slave women from the miseries of their condition. Jacobs leaves no doubt that she views northern white women as her principal readers and works skillfully to evoke their sympathies. But in the end she undercuts all their virtues of womanhood to which she is appealing. *Incidents* has, fairly, been compared to *Pamela* for its emphasis on the women's attempt to defend her virtue against a predatory and brutal master. Yet Jacobs leaves no doubt that the slave woman's defence of virtue pales beside her determination to oppose her will to that of her master; she depicts Linda Brent as becoming the mistress of another white man and bearing him two children in order to defy her master. The book is not true in any conventional sense; but the struggle of white "taking" as her black partner "giving"

"give me liberty or give me death", Jacobs insists, "[I] must fight my battle alone... My master had power and law on his side; I had a determined will. There is might in each."

Incidents is a forceful account of a woman's progress from slavery to freedom, the premier account of a slave woman's experience and perceptions in her own words. But those words must be recognized as themselves the product of craft and interpretation. Yellin has established Jacobs's historical identity, but readers may be permitted to query her enthusiasm in insisting on the complete historical accuracy of Jacobs's text. Dramatic representations of hiding in a swamp swarming with snakes, or for seven years in a crawl space of one foot by seven feet by three feet, strain credulity. More important, they conform to biblical, literary and folk conventions that endow mere events with allegorical significance. Similarly, the slave women's unfolding struggle with her master conforms to the conventions of domestic fiction. The point of these themes is literary, moral, psychological, rather than historical.

Jacobs deserves admiration not for her accuracy as a chronicler but for her power as a writer - as a political and moral witness. Yellin, in her commitment to restoring Harriet Jacobs to her rightful place in American culture and to the status of author of her own text, has dropped Linda Brent from the title-page - Jacobs, after all, used the pseudonym to protect the members of her family who were still living in slavery. But how can we be sure that she did not also use Linda Brent as an essential frame for a (transformed) autobiographical account? Neither the recovery of slave women's experience nor the recognition of an Afro-American women's literary tradition is served by insisting that Jacobs and Brent were isomorphic. After all, the importance of the authentication "written by herself" in the title was not necessarily to establish the accuracy of detail. It was, at least as much, to establish authenticity of the text.

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0 19 826677 2, 448 pages, Clarendon Press £35.00

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He insists that the major weakness of British education is its neglect of technical education; and his treatment of this subject transforms his book from a mere historical pamphlet into a valuable polemic. In 1900, he suggests, Britain might have developed a vigorous group of technical schools. Most working-class children who stayed at school after the statutory leaving age studied technical subjects. One of the leading educationalists of the period, Michael Sadler, extolled the virtues of German technical schools. Unfortunately, he was outmanoeuvred by Robert Murant, who tried to model secondary schools on his own school, Winchester. This was the first – and perhaps the most important – of numerous defeats for technical education. Between the wars technical schools languished. After 1944 the tripartite system

In *Education and Values*, a series of lectures given in honour of Richard Peters, the focus shifts from quantity to quality. Three illustrious modern philosophers – Alasdair MacIntyre, Anthony Quinton and Bernard Williams – apply themselves to a familiar problem; and they counsel caution if not despair. The most interesting essay in the book is MacIntyre's "The Idea of an Educated Public". MacIntyre argues that the task of teachers is both "essential and impossible". Confronted with two incompatible aims – to prepare children for their social roles and to encourage them to "know themselves and walk in the light of their own consciences" – they are the "innate hope of the culture of Western modernity". He contrasts the present defective educational system with the system which flourished in the Scottish Enlightenment. Eighteenth-century Scotland, he argues, boasted an educated public – a public trained in moral philosophy, committed to intellectual activity and rigorous in practical affairs.

Anti-Racist Science Teaching provides an example of current work in this tradition. Its argument, spuo out over some 318 pages, might be summarized in the form of a syllogism:

the abilities of children rather than the limitations of the system; it encourages competition, perpetuates a racist society and distracts pupils from the issue which ought to obsess them: the common struggle of working-class children; whether black or white, against capitalist oppression. Unfortunately, *Anti-Racism Science Teaching* tells us nothing about the day-to-day educational experiences of African

children trapped in unpopular schools? Will parental wealth or individual needs determine admission to desirable schools? What is to stop extremist parents from gaining control of local schools? It is to be hoped that Mr Baker has answers for all these questions. For if it will be a free-market economic dogma is allowed to discredit otherwise sensible educational policies, the

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"Very few people read Newton's works, for it takes considerable knowledge to understand him," Voltaire said.

Although Newton's ideas were used as the spearhead in the attack against organized religion in 18th-century France, Newton himself was a mystic and a metaphysician, who dabbled in alchemy, biblical prophecies and mythical allegory. "He believed that a great pattern flowed from the mind of God and that there were great truths to be perceived if you worked through all the symbolism," said Rupert Hall, a retired professor of science history who has edited Newton's letters.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE, July 9, 1987

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS
c/o Trevor Brown Associates, Suite 7, 26 Channing Green Road, Towson, MD, 21204

John C. DeLoach

Of the pessimistic persuasion

David Miller

NORMAN P. BARRY
The New Right
205pp. Croom Helm. £25.
07069 1831 X
On Classical Liberalism and Libertarianism
215pp. Macmillan. £27.50.
0333 32591 5

The current popularity of New Right thinking would have seemed quite astonishing to anyone in the mid-1960s trying to forecast the future direction of political thought. Such a person might have heard of Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman or James Buchanan, but he would have regarded their views as decidedly freakish. After the appearance of Hayek's *The Constitution of Liberty* in 1960, one commentator described it as a "magnificent dinosaur". . . . Although the description was aimed primarily at Hayek's temerity in producing a sustained piece of prescriptive political theory, it might equally have been directed against the contents, which were sharply at odds with the prevailing social-democratic consensus.

Since then, of course, the political climate has been transformed by the advent of governments here and in the United States committed to rolling back the State and widening the scope of the market. New Right ideas are in the ascendant; but the theories that lie behind them are only now beginning to receive proper critical attention. In these two valuable books, Norman P. Barry provides an insider's guide to the several rather different schools of thought that the New Right umbrella brings together. His main interest lies in neo-liberal thinking, although *The New Right* includes a comparative chapter on conservatism. He writes from a position generally favourable to the ideas under discussion, but without betraying a particular preference for any school in particular.

The exposition is clear, if not always elegant, and wholly reliable.

The New Right is the more general of the two books. It begins with surveys of neo-liberal thinking on economics and politics (including public policy), makes a short detour through conservative thought, and then explores the development of New Right thought in Britain, America and West Germany. Barry's idea is that the rather different paths taken by the New Right in each of these countries can be explained by local political factors. On the whole this approach works successfully, although it does involve some rather rapid changing of gears, as for instance when he moves from a description of planning under the post-war Labour Government to an outline of the political philosophy of Michael Oakeshott.

On *Classical Liberalism and Libertarianism* remains consistently at a higher level of abstraction. It explores the various foundations of neo-liberal thought in the Chicago and Austrian schools of economics, in the constitutionalism of James Buchanan, and in the natural rights theories developed by Ayn Rand, Robert Nozick and others. This is a more critical book, inasmuch as it explores the difficulties inherent in each of these positions. Barry does not develop an alternative view, except to comment by implication the anti-rationalist tradition of Hume and Adam Smith, continued to some extent in the writings of Hayek, which defends liberal institutions by reference to the limited powers of the human mind, and our consequent need to rely on traditions and practices whose rationale is never fully evident.

New Right economics is not itself strikingly novel. Although there have been some technical refinements, the key arguments for economic *laissez-faire* are still the ones that were adequately expressed by eighteenth and nineteenth-century liberals. The novelty comes chiefly in the attempt to explain political processes by means of the same behavioural assumptions as are standardly employed in economics. Thus politicians are portrayed as

moved entirely by desire for the spoils of office, civil servants as budget-maximizers, voters as influenced by the prospect of short-term sectional gains; no one is interested in the common good for its own sake. This framework is used to explain the steady rise in government expenditure in the capitalist democracies as an unintended but unavoidable by-product of self-interested behaviour on the part of each of these groups.

The problem with this pessimistic view of political behaviour is to see how we could ever get back to the night-watchman state that the neo-liberals favour. Since the voters cannot be induced to vote for it, no political leader (and certainly no bureaucrat) has an incentive to promote it. To extricate themselves from this impasse, New Right thinkers tend to favour a new constitutional settlement that would permanently restrict the activities of government. So we find, for instance, both Friedman and Buchanan advocating constitutional provisions that would force governments to balance their budgets; and in Hayek's recent work we have a more elaborate constitutional arrangement designed to insulate those with the power to legislate from any kind of outside economic pressure.

In the last resort, however, these proposals still fail to address the question of what incentive anyone has to introduce the necessary con-

stitutional limits. For, in the language favoured by the neo-liberals, these arrangements are public goods conferring no special advantage on the person who brings them into existence. If politics is indeed governed by self-interest, the whole operation looks like an attempt to pull oneself up by the bootstraps.

This accounts for a certain element of pathos in New Right thought. The analysis which explains the steady growth of the modern State appears to consign the neo-liberal alternative to the realm of utopia. Barry recognizes this dilemma in the concluding sections of both of these books; his own pessimism is revealed in his attitude to Mrs Thatcher and her government. For while we might expect a convinced neo-liberal to be impatient with the Conservatives' dilatoriness in rolling back the State, it would at least seem strange not to credit Mrs Thatcher with having the right intentions. But according to Barry, Conservatives are "political animals" interested in winning elections; "the current attraction that practising conservatives have for free-market ideas may be (somewhat cynically) described as another piece of political opportunism". Mrs Thatcher isn't a true believer, on this view, because no politician can ever be one; but if so, the New Right seems for ever destined to cry in the wilderness as the power and reach of the State relentlessly increase.

The laws of liberty

Noël O'Sullivan

GEORGE FEAVER and FREDERICK ROSEN
(Editors)
Lives, Liberties and the Public Good: New essays in political theory
272pp. Macmillan/London School of Economics. £27.50.
0333 39286 8

MAURICE CRANSTON
Jean-Jacques: The early life and work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau 1712-1754
382pp. Penguin. Paperback, £5.95.
0144 552324

George Feaver and Frederick Rosen have produced an admirable collection of essays to mark the retirement last year of Maurice Cranston from the Chair of Political Science which he had held at the London School of Economics since 1969. As Feaver remarks, Cranston is no ordinary professor. He is, rather, one of the last representatives of a dying species, the truly cosmopolitan man of letters, intellectually rooted (as Cranston himself notes in an illuminating postscript) in the history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Like his predecessor at the LSE, Michael Oakeshott, Cranston is distinguished by a sense of style, which has found its most satisfactory expression in the art of philosophical biography, where two definitive studies of Locke and Rousseau have served, in part at least, as a vehicle for the sustained exploration of the nature of freedom which is the unifying theme of all his work. In the tension between the English thinker's concern for rights and immunities, and the more ambitious dreams of human regeneration entertained by the Swiss admirer of ancient liberty, Cranston finds the key to the extremes between which modern political thought largely moves.

Like Cranston himself, the contributors to this *Festschrift* are concerned with the implications for liberty of that tension; Robert Orr and Harvey Mansfield Jr explore the enduring contribution of Hobbes to philosophical method and constitutional theory respectively, while Sergio Cotta adds a contemporary note with an attempt to underpin politics with a phenomenological critique of radical concepts of change, community and selfhood. Raymond Pollin maintains that our task today is to create a "reasonable balance" between liberty and social justice, and wins qualified support for his rejection of the minimal State from Risseau, who illuminates the nineteenth-century liberal tradition with an examination of the central part played by the concept of security, not only in Bentham's thought, but in R. S. Mill's as well. Kenneth Minogue likewise takes a measured step beyond constitutional minimalism.

When he maintains that liberalism has largely neglected the concept of loyalty, without which no political theory can be regarded as comprehensive, Robert Wokler defends Rousseau against those critics who see him as "totalitarian", and Sanford Lakoff carefully examines the case against him by considering Tocqueville's mixed response. William Letwin discusses whether the liberal ideal of an impartial State is necessarily invalidated by the part played by discretionary judgment in the decisions of its personnel; while Feaver reflects on the way in which, with Harriet Taylor and J. S. Mill, personal concerns converted liberty into libertarianism, whereas in the case of Beatrice and Sidney Webb they led to a quest for salvation.

Even in this substantial company one essay stands out: Shirley Letwin's discussion on the rule of law. She sees clearly that the inability to distinguish theoretically between a limit and a constraint has been one of the great misfortunes of the modern age. In political theory, the failure to make that distinction has meant that the rule of law has been stripped of all claim to universal validity by a long line of thinkers, from Marx to Dworkin. How and why this has happened, and what is necessary in order to re-establish the link between law, justice and liberty which is the foundation of Western civilization, are the themes of this remarkable piece.

The first volume of Cranston's life of Rousseau, *Jean-Jacques*, is now available in paperback. In his brief essay *My Portrait*, written towards the end of his life, Rousseau put the purpose of all his work in a single sentence: it was, he said, to provide men with a faithful image of one of themselves, in order that they might all attain self-knowledge by studying their reflection in it. He failed in this, mainly because his desire for lucidity kept turning into a quest for self-justification. Posthumously, however, he has been granted *la transparence* which he sought, through Maurice Cranston's skilful disengagement of these two concerns.

A recent addition to the series *Readings in Social and Political Theory* is *Interpreting Politics*, edited by Michael T. Gibbons (264pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £27.50; paperback, £8.95. 0631 57778). Among the pieces reprinted are "On the Social Determination of Truth" by Steven Lukes, "Language and Human Nature" by Charles Taylor, "The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality" by Jürgen Habermas, "Nietzsche: Genealogy, History" by Michel Foucault, "Method, Social Science and Social Hope" by Richard Rorty, "Beyond Hermeneutics: Interpretation in Late Heidegger and Recent Foucault" by Hubert L. Dreyfus, and "From the Nalva's Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding" by Clifford Geertz.

Marxist laments

Martin Clark

ROSSANA ROSSANDA
Anchor me: Donna, persona, memoria dal 1973 al 1986
208pp. Milan: Feltrinelli. L20,000.
8807 08037 0

Rossana Rossanda is a distinguished Italian journalist and politician. In the late 1960s she helped found the left-wing daily *Manifesto*, and was expelled from the Communist Party after some twenty-five years' membership. Since then she has become one of Italy's best-known feminist writers, although she came to feminism late—at an age, she writes, when her grandmother was already dressed permanently in black—and as a Marxist her commitment to the cause has never been total. This selection of her *Manifesto* writings between 1973 and 1986 reveals her many interests and strengths. It is tempting to call it a dialogue of an old Communist with the new Left and with the new feminism, but Rossanda is hardly a typical old Communist: she has an independence of mind and spirit, and a fundamental pessimistic scepticism, that sit uneasily within any institutional

framework, and it is surprising that she lasted as long in the Communist Party as she did. Many of her essays inevitably seem dated now, but are worth republishing if only for their literary qualities. Rossanda has a novelist's eye: the craftsmanship and sensitivity of her journalism are striking. So is a sad awareness of human frailty, perhaps best shown here in a beautiful vignette on Southern women in the earthquake zone near Benevento.

Rossanda has much to lament. In the 1970s, she looked on as the youthful hopes of 1968 collapsed around her. In the 1980s, earthquakes, corruption and nuclear clouds engulfed Italy. Through it all, Rossanda remained committed to her causes, sympathetic but also curiously detached. While other, younger, Leftists took to drugs or terrorism, she claims that she was protected from despair by her older culture, her privileged education and her years of disciplined party obedience. I suspect her sceptical intelligence had much to do with it as well. Indeed, even her Communism, by her own account, was originally an intellectual affair. True, she took part in the Resistance, but hated it—she calls it here a horrible period of slaughter and treachery, never deserving its later romantic myths. It was

her philosophy teacher, Antonio Banfi, who converted her to Marxism—"I became a Communist as any intellectual might, who was little tempted by populism and without any Christian love for the poor". She did, however, detest the rich, and felt keenly the inequities of class. Even as a Communist she insisted on her need for privacy and a personal life separate from politics and the party; and since 1969 this detachment has clearly been an essential gift of Rossanda the writer.

It is, however, an ambiguous gift in politics, as in life. On several occasions Rossanda laments that as a non-believer she can never feel a real unity with the world or with other people, and she clearly envies those who do. This makes her feminism rather ambiguous, too. She accepts, of course, the argument that marriage is a form of female slavery, invented by men to ensure that they can have children and pass on their property. Moreover, it is now outdated even scientifically, since artificial insemination allows women to form genuine single-parent families. But is this now a right—"woman's right to choose"? And should women be permitted to choose a known donor? Rossanda is not at all certain, is uneasy at the implications, and is not even convinced



"Annabelle" is reproduced from Faces of the 80s by Gessum Levine (158 black-and-white plates. Collins. £15. 0002152452).

that we have an ethical framework within which we can debate such issues. She is sure, however, that it would be a very lonely choice: "withdrawing into oneself is a poor life". Men are not necessarily overbearing; procreation and sexuality are not the basis of all power and exploitation, and most human beings need companionship.

Friendship, indeed, is a recurring theme. Some of the best essays here are on the death of friends, and how difficult it is to communicate with the dying. Why could she not say "Don't be frightened, Lisa. It won't be difficult"? In an essay on the Seven Deadly Sins, she surprisingly picks out avarice as the most typical of our age: she understands miserliness not as greed for money, but as being gloomily introverted, not open to other people, not self-confident enough to give of oneself. It is an unusual interpretation of avarice for a Marxist, but it is typical of these strange, revealing and beautifully written essays.

Feminist factions

Jennifer Hornsby

LYNNE SEGAL
Is the Future Female?: Troubled thoughts on contemporary feminism
272pp. Virago. Paperback, £4.95.
08608 697 3

MARY SARGENT FLORENCE, CATHERINE MARSHALL and C. K. OGDEN
Militarism versus Feminism: Writings on women and war
Edited by Margaret Kamester and Jo Vellacott
178pp. Virago. Paperback, £3.95.
08608 782 1

JULIET MITCHELL and ANNO OAKLEY (Editors)
What is Feminism?
252pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £25. (paperback, £5.95)
0631 14841 6

In the year in which Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister, a pamphlet appeared with the title "Beyond the Fragments" (soon revised and issued as a book). It contained essays by Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright, each offering reasons for the apparent stagnation of the British Women's Movement and suggestions for a way forward for socialist feminism. How were organizations of the Left to bring the fragments together and transform raised consciousness into effective political pressure? In *Is the Future Female?* Segal now presents a participant's account of the movement in the 1970s which suggests that perhaps it was demise, and not just fragmentation, which had occurred by 1979. The hopes that she and others expressed then were already fading, and they have been increasingly hard to sustain. But Segal is little daunted: she is clear that feminism remains a force, even if a cohesive women's movement has not survived in Britain, and her discussion here of current feminist theory in Britain and in North America is always practically, politically motivated.

Segal's opponents are what she calls "revolutionary feminists"—a label which serves to mark the distance between the actual situation and what they think desirable. The source of their pessimism lies in a view of the sexes which sees female virtue and male vice as constant and irredeemable, and as so deeply rooted as to make political generalizations of no importance. Segal criticizes them for errors both in the empirical implications of their account of women's condition, and in its reductionist biological assumptions. But even though she is politically and theoretically at odds with those who see work as the source of liberation, there is no doubt that Segal's response to their charges is a mixture of sympathy and respect. She covers issues of sex, male violence and pornography, of gender roles, motherhood and psychology, and of men, women and war, with an eye to how debatable such questions are. Her treatment is painstaking but fresh, critical

but always good-humoured. There is also something extremely personal about it: it is not that autobiography intrudes, but that Segal marks out a coherent position which is at once realistic and individual and which contains feminist orthodoxies only where experience or argument actually lead her there. It is easy to like the book, and to admire its author's involvement.

Segal challenges crude suggestions of an inevitable connection between anti-militarism and feminism. What C. K. Ogden and Mary Sargent Florence attempted to demonstrate in 1915 was a connection between militarism and anti-feminism, bringing together a vast range of historical and anthropological facts to argue a correlation between valuing ideals of warfare and devaluing women. Virago has reprinted their essay in *Militarism versus Feminism* together with extracts from a longer previously unpublished but overlapping work, and two talks by Catherine Marshall, on women and war, and women and politics. The editors provide background information and a well-researched account of feminist consciousness from the beginning of the century to the First World War. The tone of all the pieces is spirited and optimistic, and Marshall (at least at the end of her career) can be counted as a "revolutionary" of her time. Contrasting Marshall's aspirations with her successors', one can appreciate the more Segal's perception of the present scene, where there seems to be an unprecedented lack of political engagement on the part of the most radical women.

The collection of essays *What is Feminism?*, edited by Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley, sees feminists taking stock. It was conceived as a sequel to their *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (1977) but they have assembled a more homogeneous group of authors (though a more heterogeneous set of essays) than they originally intended. Dale Spender contributes an autobiographical piece. Seven of the essays are written by academic specialists, mostly North Americans, on feminism and work, welfare, health, medicine, and legal ideology. Among these is a timely historical survey from Linda Gordon of the handling of cases of child abuse and neglect; and the conflicting considerations that bear on questions of State intervention, that bear on questions of women's lives. These are wide-ranging essays, and much can be learnt from them, but they are not cohered with the large issue of the nature of feminism itself that the book's title implies. That is touched on in three historical analyses, and in Rosalind Delmar's essay "What is Feminism?". Nancy Cott is concerned with whether feminists at different times have emphasized their likeness to, or their difference from, men, and with the practical repercussions of the answer for the women's movement. Judith Stacey sheds light on the new pro-family conservatism as it is found in older, or former, feminists. Juliet Mitchell, in a depressing, but

underargued piece, sees feminism as an instrument of change fashioned by forces outside its exponents' control. Less fatalistic than Mitchell, Delmar considers that the lack of unity in present feminism is not a new phenomenon, as some historians of the first wave might make one believe. It is hard, though, to be inspired by her conclusion that feminists cannot really tell where they have got to. Greater commitment and active concern are to be found in Lynne Segal's book than in any of the British contributions to the Mitchell and Oakley collection.

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Commonplace mystifications

Julian Symons

PATRICK MARNHAM
Trullion House in the steps of Lord Lucan
204pp. Viking. £10.95.
0670183914

SALLY MOORE
Lucan Not Guilty
271pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £12.95.
028399518X

Both of these books have maps for frontispieces, showing the area where the murder took place, one with hospital, police station and houses relevant to the crime numbered, the other offering thumbnail sketches of the Lucan home, another house showing "bloodstains on doostep" and the nearby Plumber's Arms. Sally Moore's book has an inkblot plan showing the front, ground floor and basement of 46 Lower Belgrave Street, where Veronica, Lady Lucan lived with her three children and the nanny Sandra Rivett, with notations marked "scattered cups and saucers", "footprints in blood", "body in sack". This cartographical scene-setting is reminiscent of an old-fashioned detective story, one of those early Agatha Christies which show the position of the body in the library, and the bloody footprint beside the trench window.

The maps suggest there is a puzzle to be solved, but is that really so? On the night of November 7, 1974, Lady Lucan staggered into the Plumber's Arms crying that she had escaped from a man who had murdered the nanny. Sandra Rivett. She had been beaten to death and then stuffed into a canvas US mailbag. On the following morning Lady Lucan said she had been attacked by her husband, the presumption being that he had mistaken Sandra Rivett for his wife. She had fought with him, he had stopped, and taken her upstairs. Their eldest child Frances had seen the two of them briefly, her mother's face bloody, before Lady Lucan ran out to the pub. What was Lord Lucan's version? On the night of the murder he telephoned his mother twice, the first time to say that there had been a "terrible catastrophe" at his home, the second time to ask about his three children. On the same night he went to see a woman friend in Uckfield and told her, as he had told his mother, that he had seen through the hawthorn window a man attacking his wife, let himself into the house and gone downstairs (the couple had lived apart for two years, but he had a key). The intruder had escaped, and Veronica had accused him of hiring the man to kill her. He repeated this in a letter written at the same time to his friend William Shand Kydd. Three days later a Ford Corsair Lucan had borrowed from another friend was found at Newhaven. The front seats were heavily stained with blood of group A (Lady Lucan's group) and the much less usual group B (Sandra Rivett's group), and the boot contained a piece of bandaged lead

pipings similar to a bloodstained piece found in the basement. In the letter to Shand Kydd, Lucan said that he would "lie down for a bit", and nothing has been heard of him in the past thirteen years.

There was no evidence in support of Lucan's story, no trace of an intruder, and the police said he could not have seen a struggle in the basement from the street. At the time of the murder Lucan was in a serious, although not desperate, financial situation. He was a professional gambler, a house player at John Aspinall's Clermont Club, and not a successful one. He disliked his wife, believed (with some justice) that she was mentally unstable, tape-recorded arguments with her and employed detectives to watch her. He had an obsessive love for his children, and was anxious to obtain custody of them. By temperament he was inarticulate, disliked blacks, approved of hanging and flogging. What the police called the Eton mafia, to which he belonged, felt a basic contempt for the rule of law. Lucan had talked to one of them about killing Veronica and dumping her body in the Solent, saying that her death would solve his problems. Reading these two books, one finds no Christie contrivance but an essentially commonplace crime, worth no more than a couple of paragraphs even in a sensational newspaper if it had been carried out by a clerk in Surbiton or a building contractor in Stockport. Sandra Rivett's family were right in their bitter complaint that nobody was

interested in the victim, but only in the position and activities of Lucan and his friends.

Patrick Marnham would seem in agreement with this view, so much in agreement indeed that his account of the crime ends half-way through his stylishly written book, the second part of it being given to the author's activities as a one-time journalist for *Private Eye*, and his involvement in the magazine's pursuit of Harold Wilson and their battle with Sir James Goldsmith. In a final chapter, however, he suggests that various conflicts of time relating to Lucan's presence at the Clermont Club, Sandra Rivett's descent to the basement to make tea, and Lady Lucan's going down to look for her when she did not return, make it impossible for Lucan to have committed the murder in person. Marnham thinks Lucan hired a hit-man to do the job, and that the hit-man killed the wrong person. The idea involves several improbabilities relating to Lucan's behaviour on the night of the murder, quite apart from the fact that Marnham, even with the resources and contacts of *Private Eye* to help him, does not give us even a sniff of how Lucan got in touch with the hit-man, or who the man might have been. It is much more likely that the time discrepancies can be explained by human error. The principal one is a disagreement between Veronica and her daughter about the time at which Veronica went downstairs, but who is to say which of them is right?



Always on the cards

John Clay

JONATHAN GOODMAN
The Slaying of Joseph Bowne Elwell
224pp. Harp. £10.95.
024554481X

Joseph Elwell, renowned as a dapper New York man-about-town, was discovered by his housekeeper early one morning in June 1920, slumped in an armchair in his dressing-gown, without his toupee and without his false teeth. A .45 bullet had passed nearly through his head.

His killing soon became a major topic of conversation in Manhattan drawing-rooms. Reporters besieged his mansion for weeks on end. An apparent army of detectives worked on the case but were unable to come up with a solution. At the time rumours abounded. Some said the police had discovered the culprit's identity but lacked the evidence to bring a charge. Others criticized them for their inability properly to penetrate Elwell's milieu. Jonathan Goodman, an expert in such matters with a long list of mystery-solving books behind him, has sifted through the available evidence and in *The Slaying of Joseph Bowne Elwell* offers a plausible explanation, naming the culprit.

Elwell was a self-made man, in many respects representative of his era. From an early age, given his relatively humble beginnings in New Jersey, he knew that his most likely chance of making his way in the world was to capitalize on what he did best, which was playing cards. At the time the currently fashionable card game was bridge whilst (later to be superseded by auction and then contract bridge), Elwell set himself up as a teacher and authority on the game, publishing two of three excellent books on the subject. He was lucky, handsome, skilled, and having selected a wife with useful social connections, he soon gained access to the grander homes in Manhattan as well as to their more prestigious summer counterparts in Newport. There he met the young Harold Vanderbilt and instructed him in the rudiments of card play. His place in bridge history came about through this encounter, as Vanderbilt was later responsible for the introduction of contract bridge in 1925. With the same flair and intuition that had made him a fortune at cards, Elwell broadened his interests into the stock market. In Gatsby-like fashion, he maintained homes in Palm Beach and Manhattan, owned a stud farm in Kentucky with a string of racehorses, and became part of international café society. He travelled regularly to European capitals, including London, where he once dined Edward VII and King George VI.

cards.

Yet despite his success, Elwell is strangely unsympathetic. He comes across as too vain and insensitive for us to care about him, and the book rightly focuses on the causes of his death rather than on his temperament. His success with women and the jealousy this aroused seemed to lie behind his murder. Goodman charts his many affairs before and after his separation from his wife, and substantiates his reputation as a philanderer. Immediately after his death his housekeeper felt her first duty was to hide away garments belonging to his various mistresses. Goodman has combed newspaper and eyewitness reports, and guides us through the last part of his life stage by stage. At times the detail is excessive and one longs for the narrative to move more briskly - but perhaps the unavoidable thinness of the tale and lack of hard evidence call for such embellishment. The style is often jocular, sometimes roiling with phrases such as "gossip-columnists' unanimous undoubtedness", but mostly it hits the right note. *The Slaying of Joseph Bowne Elwell* will appeal to the cognoscenti of mystery stories and to those fascinated by high-society murders, aware in this case of the irony that the card-player's habitual secrecy has led this time to the essential, still unrevealed, secret being taken to the grave.

Incompetence in command

Brian Bond

TIM TRAVERS
The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and the emergence of modern warfare, 1900-1918
309pp. Allen and Unwin. £25.
0049422057

EDWIN CAMPION VAUGHAN
Some Desperate Glory: The diary of a young officer, 1917
232pp. Cooper. £16.
0890528402

BERNARD MARTIN
Poor Bloody Infantry: A subaltern on the Western Front 1916-1917
174pp. Murray. £11.95.
0719543746

J.C. DUNN
The War the Infantry Knew 1914-1919: A chronicle of service in France and Belgium
613pp. Jane's. £18.
0710604858

With a perspective of nearly seventy years, scholars are now at last beginning to approach the First World War more objectively and are more thoroughly exploiting the great variety of archival sources. Tim Travers's impressively documented study, *The Killing Ground*, is particularly welcome for the new light it throws on the British command structure and the operational problems on the Western Front, as distinct from high policy and strategy, which have already received a fair amount of scholarly attention.

Travers also makes an ambitious attempt to place military problems in the wider context of the pre-1914 social environment and Zeitgeist. He is surely right to argue that the high command's difficulties in overcoming new operational obstacles during the war had much to do with surviving pre-war attitudes, and to principles of war imbibed at the Staff College in the 1890s. He certainly demonstrates that the promotion system depended too heavily on good connections, and that French, Haig and their colleagues were ill prepared psychologically to adapt quickly to a new "modern" warfare dominated by firepower and machines. However, some doubts arise about how far these criticisms of the pre-1914 military hierarchy can be pressed. Travers's indictment depends heavily on hindsight, and it hardly seems fair to criticize generals for not understanding in 1908 what had become common knowledge by 1918. More specifically, the British Army of the 1900s was a small volunteer force barely adequately equipped for imperial campaigns. Its leaders could not assume (though admittedly Sir Henry Wilson did so) that it would be sent to fight on the Continent in the event of war between France and Germany; much less that it would be kept there for over four years and vastly expanded by conscription supported by a nation geared to total war.

Furthermore, though Travers makes some legitimate points about the army leaders' amateur "anti-modern" spirit, he does not carefully define the slippery notion of "professionalism". Indeed he quotes the present reviewer's work to show that in some respects there had been no significant change by the 1930s. This leaves the reader wondering when, if ever, the British Army attained full professionalism.

The opening chapters also raise the issue as to how far such pre-1914 phenomena as the cult of the offensive and the tendency to favour "moral factors" as against firepower were common to other nations or characteristically British. This comparative problem is only briefly examined in the epilogue where French and German developments are summarized. These reservations do not apply to the critical but fair description of Sir Douglas Haig's character and of the way he ran GHQ. Haig displayed an almost obsessive need for order and was simply not receptive to basic changes of ideas or way of life. His chief of intelligence, Brigadier John Charteris, who did untold damage by pandering to his commander's optimistic assessments of German "reserve strength" and morale, noted that Haig was "immensely jealous of his own views", and since he did little outside reading, "He had not a critical mind". Haig's rigid personality and conception of his role as Commander-in-Chief also served

to isolate GHQ from the rest of the Army. His forbidding and tactless manner virtually prevented serious discussion of alternative strategy or tactics either at GHQ or at conferences, where Haig simply issued orders. Even senior Army commanders such as Rawlinson and Plumer were afraid of Haig and seldom dared to question him or make suggestions.

In his analysis of the faulty preparations for and execution of the Somme campaign, Travers takes up and develops the theories advanced by Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham in *Fire-Power* (1982). Haig adhered to the Staff College concept that the Commander-in-Chief should determine the broad strategic plan and then allow his subordinates to carry out the offensive (as Sir Ian Hamilton also did at Gallipoli). Unfortunately Sir Henry Rawlinson, Haig's chief executant on the Somme as commander of the Fourth Army, had a very different notion of what was operationally possible in the siege conditions of 1916, and their differences were never properly resolved. Fortified by the faith that his plan had divine backing, Haig strongly believed in a complete breakthrough which would be exploited by the cavalry. By contrast, Rawlinson was confident of capturing the enemy's front trenches (the Green Line objective), but was pessimistic about taking the second and third lines. Instead he believed in the "bite and hold" principle which required the troops to seize the enemy's front trenches and hold them against the inevitable counter-attacks. In this more pessimistic concept, German losses mattered more than ground gained. Rawlinson expected to get through the German lines in two or three weeks by a series of methodical attacks, but neither he nor Haig had properly considered what to do if their plans failed.

In addition to the gulf between GHQ and the Army Commanders, the whole chain of command proved too cumbersome to take advantage of the fleeting opportunities that did occur, for example at Montauban on July 1. Too often the front line units were given impossible tasks against uncut wire and machine-guns, their protests ignored and their commanders made scapegoats after costly failures. Among the chief causes of failure, Travers highlights the inadequacy of the British artillery - in numbers, type of ammunition, intelligence, air-ground liaison, and bombardment techniques - to silence the enemy's batteries. After the initial failures, Haig and GHQ could think of no alternative but repeated attacks against the German lines in the hope that the enemy's reserves would be exhausted and his morale would crumble. Travers interprets this grim attritional phase in terms of Haig applying pre-war concepts of the offensive as a means of overcoming enemy morale, when what was really needed was a fundamental change in strategy and tactics.

Having established the main weaknesses in the British command system and operational tactics at the Somme, Travers suggests GHQ's slowness in learning the necessary lessons by more impressionistic sketches of the Passchendaele and March 1918 campaigns. It is a pity that there is no account of the victorious Allied advance from the summer of 1918: did Haig and GHQ at last successfully adopt the techniques of modern warfare?

In the later chapters Travers's main concern is to reveal the remarkable discrepancies between what actually happened and the versions handed down to posterity in the long-gestating volumes of the official history, the last of which appeared in 1948. These chapters have some of the ingredients of courtroom drama, with Haig and Rawlinson "in the dock" over the Somme failure; Haig and Gough over Passchendaele; and Haig, Gough, Byng and Robertson over the chaotic March 1918 retreat. Travers's skillful and persuasive adjudication in these tortuous transactions between the surviving generals and the chief official historian, Sir James Edmonds, results from painstaking detective work in the relevant files at the Public Record Office and other archives, notably the Liddell Hart Papers. This brilliant analysis of Edmonds's machinations, deletions, falsifications and cover-ups deserves to be taken further, or because, as Travers remarks, "the history of the British Army on the Western Front is also the history of the writing of that story".

Some Desperate Glory, first published in 1981 and now reissued, covers Edwin Campion

Vaughan's experiences on the Western Front in 1917 as a junior officer in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. It is described on the dust-jacket - with pardonable exaggeration - as "one of the most moving and readable accounts of warfare ever to have been published". John Terraine provides a useful introduction to the battles in which Vaughan fought, but one would have welcomed more information about his diary, which was discovered by his brother in 1940 nine years after his death. The secret of this book's appeal lies perhaps in Vaughan's painfully honest admission of his weaknesses in his struggle to become a good officer; his close relations with the soldiers under his command; and the fact that he was a gifted writer.

Like Vaughan, Bernard Martin went to war with a copy of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* in his pack, but unlike the diarist he lived to write up these recollections from an earlier version, in his mid-eighties. *Poor Bloody Infantry* is the skilful memoir of an experienced author, amusing, poignant and well illustrated, but undoubtedly influenced - as in the title - by later attitudes to the war.

The War the Infantry Knew 1914-1919 is a very special book with an unusual history. Captain J.C. Dunn, a distinguished and much-decorated Scottish doctor, served as medical officer to the second battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers between 1915 and 1918. Disaffected with the narrow conception of the regimental history commissioned in the 1920s, he decided to compile his own unofficial history based on careful contemporary notes, supplemented by a prolonged correspondence with survivors, other ranks as well as officers. Helped by Siegfried Sassoon, who had briefly served in the second battalion, he eventually got the book privately published in a limited edition in 1938, when unfortunately it was soon overshadowed by another war.

Dunn was an extremely reticent and modest man; he published the book anonymously, greatly underplayed his own role in the bat-

tion's actions, and destroyed most of his papers. Consequently, Keith Simpson, who is responsible for the volume's republication, deserves the thanks of all students of the war for his admirable introduction, in which he has pieced together the essential facts of Dunn's career and explains his method and purpose in compiling the book. Dunn adopted the principle that nothing was too trivial to be considered for the battalion's war record. This was to be the total war experience of an elite infantry battalion. He was also determined to capture the mood and atmosphere of the war years as experienced at the time: Robert Graves's rather imaginative contribution was rejected partly because it infringed this rule. (Dunn strongly objected to the fictional element in Graves's *Goodbye To All That*). The final result is a remarkably coherent narrative of the battalion's experiences in diary form with the numerous contributors indicated in footnotes. Dunn had served in the ranks in the South African War and retained a great admiration for the professionalism of the pre-war regular army. Though he managed to find a cause for sardonic humour in many distressing episodes, he frequently gives vent to biting criticisms of the incompetence and remoteness of the higher formation commanders and their staffs. During the war the second battalion lost thirty-nine officers and 1,106 other ranks killed in action, more than the fully mobilized strength of the battalion in 1914. As in any gripping story, many of these soldiers - of all ranks - come alive in these pages and claim the reader's interest and sympathy. Some of them appear in the illustrations, as does the tiny group which served with the second battalion throughout the war and survived.

By his act of homage and commemoration to the battalion in whose company he had probably found the greatest happiness and sense of fulfilment in his life, Captain Dunn fashioned a moving historical record which deserves to be added to the select list of outstanding accounts of the First World War.

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John Coyle

Trips round the island

Katherine Bucknell

EDWARD UPWARD
The Night Walk and Other Stories
179pp. Heinemann. £9.95.
01438 1173-4

The Night Walk and Other Stories makes clear that, despite advancing age and occasional despair, Edward Upward remains bravely committed to the dialectical relation between poetry and politics whose development he charted in *The Spiral Ascent* (1977). A few pieces in this new volume invite the now familiar charge that Upward has sacrificed his youthful literary promise to his political convictions. Despite their poetic qualities, some of the "Nine Political Prose Pieces" seem trivial, even hectoring: "Over the Cliff" and "The Interview" fail to compel. But the book offers a notable variety of narrative styles, and in several of the stories Upward defends his career with subtle and self-conscious skill.

In "The Procession", a shadowy vision of the public funeral he feels certain he will never have, Upward explains why he abandoned the celebrated fantastic style of his youth. Yet the dreamlike quality of the story itself shows that he can still write fantasy. So does the nightmare atmosphere of "The Night Walk". Reminiscent of *Journey to the Border* (1938), "The Night Walk" is a confessional parable about Upward's lifelong struggle with art, teaching and politics. It concludes with the symbolic recommitment of "Henry Mitchell" (Upward) with "Harry", an earlier political self eager to renew his commitment to the truly Leninist Party betrayed, in Upward's view, by the British Communist Party after the war. This weird and vivid story also represents Upward's recommitment with an earlier artistic self, since it is written in the youthful style he once abandoned in order to serve the Party.

Perhaps the finest story in this collection is "The White-Pinched Black Cat". It describes "aging and loneliness and illness and death" in a society which abuses and finally abandons those who serve and believe in it. Quietly narrated, with a remarkable evenness of tone, "The White-Pinched Black Cat" moves the reader more forcibly than Upward's overtly political work. It reveals in particular his sympathy with the position of women. This sympathy seems personal as well as political, emerging again in "Her Day", a forgoing memorial to a woman whom readers of Upward's trilogy will recognize as his mother.

W. H. Auden haunts this volume just as, apparently, he haunts Upward's dreams. As "J. R. Sedgely" in "The Procession" Auden is so severe but understanding critic humbled by self-knowledge. In "The Poet Who Died" he is remembered as "the only potential giant among us", suggesting that Upward's resentment of Auden's mature political stance is made more bitter by Upward's disillusion with his own ambitions. The younger Auden is revived by a scene on the Isle of Wight which reminds Upward of Auden's 1935 poem beginning "Look, stranger". "Look, stranger", without which Upward says he would view "everything... in a poorer imaginative light", was written about nine months after Upward's own prose poem "The Island" appeared in the

Left Review. Auden's poem echoes the lyrical rhythms of Upward's, and another Auden poem of that year, beginning "August for the people and their favourite islands", suggests similar horror.

Upward's island symbolized the life the revolution would eventually bring about: "a real place, the island as it can be, a place for men and women, as it must be, as it will be". Since the 1930s, his belief in this island has cut him off from critical success and from his artistic contemporaries and friends. This is a hidden theme of his longest story about Auden, "At the Ferry Inn", which describes a reconciliation between "Arnold Olney" (Upward) and "Walter Selwyn" (Auden). Their meeting on the island to which Olney has retired is disrupted by the arguments that have long divided the two. A smile and a wave reassures Arnold that Walter's abrupt departure "didn't mean that the ending of their long estrangement had been illusory"; but the island Upward envisaged in his 1935 prose poem still does not exist, and faith that it ever will have proved only a brief meeting place for a generation since dispersed in various different literary and political directions.

Undervalued Victorians

Aurea Carpenter

MARGARET PUIWER
Goblin Fruit
94pp. Journeyman. Paperback, £4.95.

Margaret Puiwer's first novel *Goblin Fruit* has most of the classic elements of Victorian melodrama. Set in a claustrophobic, Bulgarian walk of Victorian London, the novel traces the intricacies of an artist's aspirations and frustrations with various female types – the spiritual nurse, the submissive consumptive, (both of whom die of unrequited love); the voluptuous sensualist; and finally Eliza, who differs from these, being an aspiring writer, and something of an outcast, in the contemporary social climate, since she perseveres with an intellectual life of her own.

The book is divided into what can almost be taken as three separate short stories, which give us three views of the male protagonist, Nicholas Sutor. The first portrays his relationship with one of his models, who perishes in languid but vengeful protest when he is unfaithful. In the second part his story is taken up by Eliza, resident companion to the woman Sutor marries after his model's death. Witnessing the collapse of this marriage and the consequent death of her friend, Eliza is, meanwhile, herself drawn to the artist. Their relationship is described in the third and final part of the novel in a semi-confessional tract by the artist himself.

While never quite inviting us to fit it to a conventional feminist canon, this book speaks out against the fragility of women's position as society has conceived it. For until Eliza enters his life, Nicholas's relentless pursuit of his art proves fatal for his victims in love. On the one hand, there is the unconsummated affair with an idealized image of woman, which verges on the macabre. On the other, lust and sexual desire are shown to generate the distorted reality of "goblinhood". Somewhere between these polarities, we catch just a glimpse of a suggestion that conflicting desires might be re-

Strange sanctum

Neville Shack

STANISLAW LEM
Fiasco
Translated by Michael Kandel
322pp. Deutsch. £11.95.
0233 981411

Quinta is a strange planet in the solar system that will not readily yield its secrets to a band of curious travellers from Earth. The spaceship *Fiermes* voyages in search of contact with this unknown civilization. Technologies on different planets are born and die according to their own cycles. We might not hear from them when they are at a primitive stage because they don't have the scientific means to communicate with other living intelligences. On the other hand, when a highly developed civilization like Quinta says silent, there are all kinds of theories to try and explain why.

Stanislaw Lem zestfully projects a whole series of phenomena, natural and extranatural, plausible and logic-defying, in order to clarify and obfuscate; the SF jargon reads sometimes like honest data from a brainstorm

conceal. Eliza matches his art with hers: alongside his endless portraits of the women under his spell, she writes lurid tales of female revenge, and her self-assertion appears to bear fruit. Yet Eliza is soon forced to recognize the ephemerality of their contentment; the de-powered underworld of the labyrinth is never quite out of sight.

Compelling though it is, one feels just a little unsettled in this "Victorian" dialogue. The complex articulation of imagination and psyche amid mythological illusions, and a stifling atmosphere of emotional and sexual tension at times bring it perilously close to confusion. But perhaps this is the author's intention; for, certainly, it plays with our contemporary stereotype of what a novel talking about women in that era ought to be like.

Current accounts

Anna Vaux

LAUREL GOLDMAN
The Part of Fortune
249pp. Faber. £10.95.
0571 149219

Clara Julian is a story-teller. She will tell stories "anywhere to anyone who'll listen". She has, in the past, told stories at "Y's"; though she is now at an old people's home in the American South, telling its five remaining inmates stories about themselves. Occasionally, she likes to "efface" herself (the "best narrators" do); at other times she prefers to indulge in fantasies of her own. Either way, she is a useful device for a writer who has little in the way of story herself. Clara is tidy (fragments of life don't need to be stretched), but she is versatile (many random departures and italicized passages, since part of the point of her is her narrative freedom).

In *The Part of Fortune* such fragments – the discontinuous monologues of Green Mansions' inmates; Clara's stories and her piecemeal memories of life back at home – do not add up to much. There is no forward movement – which is apt; though the Home is under a demolition order and has two weeks in which to close. But there is no backwards movement either, as the passages of retrospection abruptly give way to tales of other characters neither seen before nor heard of after. These could just be allegorical. Yet we never know whether the inmates hear the tales, or how much Clara means them to. She gives us no clues as to their mental lives, nor enquires more deeply into their times recalled.

But then, Clara does not feel as if she needs to. What she is listening for is "her" (the words "but" and "the current rushing from their lives to mine" follow like this: the novel picks its way through case histories (David Martin's tortured relationship with his dying wife and schizophrenic child; Mrs. Green's first husband's

of astrophysics and cosmology, sometimes like the details of an elaborate joke on the part of Lem himself. *Fiasco* is a story of cosmic misunderstanding, littered with the illusions of terrestrial experience.

On a course full of hazards, including giant black holes with their promise of gravitational oblivion, and bouncing "collapsars", a kind of high-velocity holocaust, the intrepid crew of the *Hermes* head for their destination. Existing human knowledge does not stretch far enough for the purposes of this journey. Physics is a narrow path drawn across a gulf that the human imagination cannot span.

The approach to Quinta itself prompts many far-reaching questions; the crew of *Hermes* are baffled. A ring of ice chunks encircles the planet, as if set up to create extremely stormy, wet weather. Almost a million satellites float around in orbit; the ionosphere has been filled with white noise which drowns out all radio signals. Everything seems utterly mysterious. If the inhabitants of Quinta have a faith of some kind, perhaps this silence, almost a technological self-effacement, implies a holiness, an electromagnetic sanctum. *Hermes'* trusted computer, DEUS, faces severe problems in deciphering the truth. At the heart of this machine, Lem writes, is the stubborn inheritance of anthropocentrism.

Tentative answers are thrown up to the Quintan riddle. The planet has turned itself into a war-sphere, with the building of weapons consuming all its resources. The escalating arms race at some point moved into the entire solar system. A network of checks and deterrents failed to stop the spiral of mutually assured destruction.

How does the *Hermes*, a cosmic intruder in this nightmarish astronomical zone, make contact with such a heavily militarized civilization? How do the crew wrestle with a variety of moral and philosophical dilemmas when they consider what to do? *Fiasco* presents arguments and allegorical scenarios galore. Stanislaw Lem gives the aura of galactic picturesque dreadfulness; the often absurd scientific detail contains graphic power, while the tale of cataclysm works to unsettle.

chart and intravenous drip), conversations (in the main perfunctory) and reminiscences, to end at every point with the detailed letters from the son obsessed with prostitutes in South Korea, or with Mrs Jessup's granddaughter who has endured any number of indecent assaults. Even when there is a abuse enough on one level, the book further insists on it. Clara promises to "reimagine" Johanna's life, to create "possibilities no longer possible" for her; it is the longest section in the novel, an episodic account of dimly bad times, and dwells almost single-mindedly on sexual cruelty and masturbation.

Is this the "basing epic of... ordinary lives" acclaimed on the dust-jacket? Or something different altogether? Honora's husband died falling off a roof; she was told by a boy who was immediately sick; it gave her something to do; she cleaned it up and went upstairs; "I laid on the bed... I just did it, and then fell asleep". The disappointments are bearable because the inmates don't seem to notice them much; theirs is a language so disconnected from feeling that it works to the opposite effect. Honora, we are to understand, has a self-lacerating touch made to look warmer and wittier as her sufferings pile up; deadened as she sounds, she feels very deeply.

Some moments do give a certain pleasure, such as the off-the-cuff remark that twist gross sentimentality into sharp comic aphorism. But these are not enough for much to be supported. Questions are answered with unconnected statements or with anecdote that flakes and disappears, indifferent to what was asked. Clara's neutral prose fails to register the shocks of administrators, and is so lacking in irony it looks like comedy. Though it comes as no surprise that when Green Mansions has to close, Clara, either mind or blood (didn't anybody tell her?), abandons her friends at their moment of crisis to go and tell stories to somebody else – maladjusted enough to condescend to a writer who has some good passages but who still only wants to write a novel.

Revising the canon

Marilyn Butler

Last year, the Cambridge historian David Cannadine informed the readers of the TLS why, broadly, he was leaving Britain for the United States. He wrote of the pointlessness of specializing in British history, now that no one but the British were interested in it. In this respect scholars of English literature are in a far more favourable situation than historians. The conditions affecting literature have been revolutionized from time to time. The invention of printing, the extension of literacy and leisure, the mechanization of book-production, each in turn brought in new readers, and in the end the readers determine the books. We are now living through the greatest expansion yet of the reading public for serious books in English. Thanks to the world dominance of the United States, English is what Latin once was, a world language. But this also means that English literature will become what the Roman empire made Latin literature, and indeed Greek literature too. It is the world's literary heritage we now need to consider.

We in Britain have our own domestic reasons for reopening the question, how and to what end we should read the literature of the past. We are about to make changes in the school curriculum that will establish priorities between subjects, and priorities within them. English language is to be given the role of a core subject. Where language goes, there will be literature, some of it (one hopes) the linguistically and intellectually sophisticated literature of the past. But which past? whose past? The consultation document which the Department of Education and Science sent out in July 1987 on the National Curriculum wisely acknowledged that its content must depend on who the pupils are now and where they have come from. We should ensure, it says, "that all pupils, regardless of sex, ethnic origin and geographical location, have access to broadly the same good and relevant curriculum and programmes of study". True, it goes on to speak of a body of pre-existent knowledge, the "key content, skills and processes which they need to learn". But it also respects "relevance to the pupils' own experience" and "continuing value to adult and working life". These requirements are finely met by literature in principle. It provides models for using the language, most universal of all skills to advanced society; it opens the door to experience, personal and social, in the adult world. This does not mean that it is a simple matter to choose a syllabus for literature that rises to the challenge of a new and diverse school population, at home as well as abroad.

The Secretary of State for Education is asking a radical and dazzlingly interesting question. As a question government puts to professional academics – I take it he is putting it to us, among others – it is more typical of the nineteenth century than of the twentieth. The Victorians planned programmes of mass education, and drew up syllabuses for them, within new, or reformed universities, only recently departmentalized into the modern breakdown of subjects. With those neat fences built, modern academics could sit down to specialize, meaning that they steadily perfected the codes in which they could speak, within each subject, to one another. High-tech literary criticism has characteristically meant refinements in close reading. The successive innovations of Practical Criticism, New Criticism, deconstruction, though antagonistic theoretically, are alike in classroom application. They facilitate the subtle, in-faculty discussion of a single poem, or a passage from a longer work – written by a writer whom we, teachers and students, know or are expected to know. How do we determine which books to read and to recommend? The strange answer, most of our clever century, is that this all-important issue was settled before we came on the scene. But by whom? Some talk of professional opinion, others of the verdict of history; disinterested judges, allegedly, but nameless, textless, unchallengeable. It is no criticism of close reading, the core skill of our discipline, to say that it cannot be all-sufficient. It must always be supplemented by each generation by those who want to inspect the fences, not just to strengthen them, but to ask if they are now in the right places. The time

is overdue for us to step outside the containing structures reared by Victorians, in order to see where we now want to conserve, where to build for ourselves, where to allow for our new readers.

It can't be much more than four hundred years since the centralized nation-states of Western Europe such as England began to cultivate their own pasts, including their vernacular literary pasts, as a means of raising national consciousness. For about half that time, the first two hundred years or so, those who took a patriot pride in native English (and in Scottish and Welsh) literatures were often not nationalists, in the modern sense of rallying behind the nation's leaders. From the seventeenth century on, amateurs among the gentry and middle sort collected vernacular books or the ephemera of popular culture. Pepys's huge collection of ballads, now in Magdalene College, is shortly to be published, thanks to members of the Cambridge faculty, and it illustrates the appeal of native alternatives to the aristocratic classical tradition. When the House of Commons debated the future of Latin earlier this month, we heard heartfelt references to three thousand years of European culture. The same line of legitimacy was invoked in the eighteenth century to justify that period's truly conspicuous consumption in the arts – in architecture, or in classical statuary. But the classical heritage was articulately contested by other people's traditions. The new middle-class journals, with their largely provincial readership, encouraged the emergence of a more British, non-Latinate literary past, including ballads, Gothic tales, Elizabethan lyric and drama, and (for the learned like Cambridge's Thomas Gray) Anglo-Saxon, Celtic and Old Norse. The eighteenth-century writers who claimed that literature was originally simple and spontaneous were not themselves especially simple, and some of them invented their evidence, but they got what they wanted from history by re-making it. That generation, as well as the Victorians, is one of our possible models.

A single, official English literary history emerges only in the 1820s. The monoliths which European nation-states then made of their cultural traditions are deeply impressive, since they served all sorts of civic purposes, from mass literacy to nationalism, while remaining usefully economical. Critics around 1830 made the single great line of English poets, stretching (almost) unbroken from Chaucer to Tennyson. The so-called literary canon, a significantly theological term, was as characteristic of the age of its birth as the railway, and as much the symbol of British achievement. Together the single line of poets personified the national spirit, separately they were thoughtful, humane men – a little too like the ideal university professor, perhaps, but wisdom and tolerance remain virtues. Wordsworth emerged *primus inter pares* among the other five Romantics – then Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley, Keats – because he taught a stoical, essentially optimistic acceptance of suffering, and because his vision of nature represented England as a pastoral society; which was comforting in other ways.

The impact of the canon on all our perceptions is perhaps most striking when we reflect how quickly and how totally it changed the look of the two literary generations before its acceptance. In the age of Adam Smith, large numbers of general readers were able to buy or borrow books for the first time. The novels and poems offered to these new readers were often quotidian in their concerns, and direct, non-specialized in their vocabulary and range of allusion. Many authors were women; some of the best poets, we might now agree – like Burns and Blake – came from the ranks. Nineteenth-century professionals, journalists and needn'ts, made great writers into an officer class; and imposed restrictions on the entry of women and NCOs. The canon looks harmonious rather than contentious; learned or polite rather than artless or common; national, rather than provincial or sectarian on the one hand, or dispersed and international on the other. Literature is individualistic or pluralist; words such as "canon" and "heritage" impose a uniformity that had some practical advantages, especially at the outset, but was always artificial.

The case against continuing with that canon as the basis for university teaching is, by now



A detail from Thomas Allan's "Boating on Derwentwater near Ludlow", reproduced from *The Illustrated Lake Poets: Their lives, their poetry and the landscape that inspired them* by Molly Lefebvre (1929pp. Windward. £10.95. 0 712 0477 2).

formidable. Over time it seems to have acquired a weird momentum of its own, and to have introduced various restrictive practices into criticism. Some originally pragmatic choices acquired fixity because, by the mid-twentieth century, if you are a dead author and not in the canon you are probably not in print. The number of writers one must study gets fewer, and the number of poems by each writer gets much fewer, as time goes on. The questions that can be asked of major figures dwindle in number and importance with the fading of minor ones. The relations between texts are always of crucial significance, but it was left to twentieth-century scholars to claim that only major texts and major authors have meaningful relations. Keats now communes too often with Shakespeare, Wordsworth with St Augustine, everyone with the Bible. However much an artist is indebted to the mighty dead, he or she almost certainly borrows more from the living – that is, from writers no longer available for reading except in libraries. In the end, evaluation itself is threatened: how can you operate the techniques for telling who a major writer is, if you don't know what a minor one looks like?

Even in its adjusted modern form, the canon is being rapidly overtaken by events. Already within the last generation some academics at Yale and Cornell have been redrafting literary history, while often denying that there is a literary history worth studying. Northrop Frye, M. H. Abrams, Harold Bloom and their colleagues and pupils have quietly installed their own line, which gives the modern East Coast intellectual his own appropriate intellectual genealogy, and is also, perhaps accidentally, continuous with the independent history of the United States of America.

This line begins with Kant and runs through Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley to Hegel, Emerson, Carlyle, Whitman, Nietzsche, Freud and Wallace Stevens. German thinkers play a large part in the New England canon; many of the academics constructing it seem to have spoken German as their first language, and to have trained in traditions that gave them no such personal motives for Anglophilia as old-style Ivy League professors often had. Since America has always been a multi-ethnic community, the British-built canon must often have tended to alienate, or at least fail to inspire, many of its students of literature. It must be said, however, that the new Modernist-Romantic canon hardly looks tailor-made for students: it is still Eurocentric and intimidantly learned, through its range of allusion to the two-thousand-year Hebrew religious tradition which the English Romantics allegedly revived. Within another generation, if wealth and prestige within the American university system continue to shift to California, we are surely destined to see another revision. If this one puts down genuine local roots, it might reflect the interests

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Bestsellers and bad Europeans

Lorna Sage

"E" manager, opinion leader, decision maker. If it letters in *Repubblica*, Italy's most serious newspaper, it is a book to be read. The medium is the message, English is the Esperanto of the consumer culture, the Italian for "Made in Italy" is "Made in Italy". In the selling of books a quality similar tradition has long obtained. The best-selling writer of fiction—in particular the writer of certain kinds of genre fiction (crime, spy stories and, increasingly, romances)—is also conventionally imagined as "English" or "Anglo-Saxon", at least so far as his or her name is concerned. You hear stories of Italian writers in these genres hiding behind pseudonyms, and Americans with Italian surnames whose sales mysteriously suffer. The mythology is backed up by commercial fact: around 63 per cent of all viable titles published (those that sell 2,000 copies or more) are foreign works in translation, and a very high proportion of these are "English". A current fiction bestseller list starts something like this: Wilbur Smith, Dillwyn, Sciascia, Scott Turow, Niven, Stephen King, Peter Dinklage, Foster (Maurice)—except that most newspapers routinely use separate lists for foreign works and Italian ones. If you look at the number of copies sold, then the picture improves a bit (58 per cent foreign, 42 per cent Italian), as it does from the point of view of selling over time: Italian bestsellers are more durable. The statistics come from Giorgio Grassi ("I libri di successo . . . 1982-1984" in *Almanac* edited by Marino Livolsi), who argues that Italian publishers are more smitten by foreign titles than the consumer turns out to be. None the less, on the face of it, this looks very like the bleak prospect George Steiner surveyed twelve years ago at the end of *After Babel*: "In many societies imported English . . . erasing the autonomy of the native language-culture . . . perhaps, the least repatriable of the economic ravages which distinguish our age."

But is this how it works? What price "autonomy"? Another recent study of the Italian book business, *Il romanzo d'ordine* by Im-

maginario e mercato by Cristiano Benussi and Giulio Lughini (1986) looks at eighty Italian writers who published their first novels between 1975 and 1983, and—by means of a questionnaire—tries to work out how they see their roots, who their mentors and models are, how Italian and autonomous they feel. These are not genre writers, nor (with the exception of Eco) big bestsellers, but authors of what we now seem condemned to call "literary fiction". They were all short-listed for the Viareggio first novel prize, and the mental company they claim to keep is appropriately grand and idiosyncratic. However, their responses to questions on "influences" do fall into suggestive patterns. Mentioned five times are Cervantes, Dante, le Carré, Musil and Sartre; Borges, Minzoni, Shakespeare and Stevenson are cited six times each; and so on up to Thomas Mann (a dozen citations), Kafka (lucky thirteen) and Conrad (most admired of all) with fourteen mentions. Benussi and Lughini speculate, taking their cue from Conrad's popularity, that perhaps the most important kinds of writing their subjects were influenced by are "English" and writings about the adventures of othersness—that is, a list made up of Conrad, Jack London, Melville and Stevenson. And they are confirmed in their sense that Italian writers think of writing itself as somehow "foreign" by the response to questions about influences closer to home. Eco confesses to not reading very much contemporary Italian writing at all; others do produce a "twentieth century" list with Calvino, Svevo and Gadda at the top—adventures again, Benussi and Lughini suggest, at the level of language and narrative strategy. It is an analysis that ends a herculean dimension to the Italian novelist's enterprise, a sense of risk, exposure and daring. None of them, not even the most traditional, it's argued, is exactly "at home" in

the genre—or indeed, in the language. Immediately after the unification of Italy, we're reminded, possibly as few as 5 per cent of Italians spoke (Tuscan) Italian; the notion of unity in language was, and perhaps still is in some ways, a fiction. Not that the new novelists write regional novels, but they inhabit the language with a certain wariness. Discussing *Piazza d'Italia* by Antonio Tabucchi, a novel which might seem to contradict their thesis, the authors argue that its traditional Tuscan taste for story-telling, vivid images and lexical richness is subtly overlaid with a patina of world-weariness. They detect the secret estrangement of someone who, after a long voyage, likes to sit at home by the fire: his pleasure is quite different in kind from the warmth he'd have felt if he'd never been away.

It's a scenario that owes a good deal, perhaps, to the "Eco factor". The huge international success of *The Name of the Rose* suggests all sorts of exciting possibilities—for instance the cultural "Sorpasso". More modestly, that not-feeling-at-home may be a vital clue to translatability, both literally and metaphorically (though it may help to be usonotician first). Certainly Benussi and Lughini provide the basis for a disconcertingly different reading of the empire of "English", as a source of imaginative inability. They don't ask their subjects whether they used to read Conrad (or Kafka or Borges or Sartre) in translation, and it seems a significant omission: translation, possibly, becomes second nature if you don't ask for or expect the kind of automatic intimacy with the language that afflicts so many English-speaking readers. And you may well be better at reading translations if you have a second language, even if it's not the one in question. Certainly, the contrast with the British situation could hardly be more striking. One recent example: Collins Harvill, who pride themselves on their record of publishing works in translation, and whose leopard logo is a tribute to Tannius's *Il Lincepudo's Il gattopardo*, will be lucky if, with all publicity can do, they sell 5,000 copies of Georges

Perec's *Life: A User's Manual* (a grand exception and anyway a mature "classic" by Christmas. Basically, we behave as if we don't need literature that originates in other languages, being (unlike Italians) in possession of that "world" language, able to repose on (George Steiner again) "a somnambular, genetic" familiarity with our words. Another example: *The Lover* by Marguerite Duras, Goncourt-winner and (surely) easy on the high-bourgeois eye, sold in Britain around 6,000 copies in hardback, compared with some 300,000 in Italy.

You can argue that English readers have enough that's exotic within their own language—American English, Australian English, West Indian English; Salman Rushdie, Kazuo Ishiguro, Timothy Mo . . . But there's no escaping the suspicion that we think the curse of Babel has been reserved for foreigners. We have to be wrong. For a start, our habits make us very bad Europeans. Once upon a time, back in the sixteenth century, we too were eager translators, plus a touch paranoid (were we rehearsing the future?) about our native purity: this is Sir John Cheke, prefacing Sir Thomas Hoby's translation of Castiglione's *Courtier*—"I am of this opinion that our own tongue should be written clean and pure, unmixed and unmingled with borrowing of other tongues, wherein if we take not heed by time, ever borrowing and never pausing, she shall be fain to keep her house as bankrupt." Hoby couldn't translate Castiglione's basic word, "sprezzatura", and we still don't have a word for it ("recklessness" was Hoby's try). When we were culturally colonized and reckless, the culture produced Elizabethan theatre and Milton. We assimilated, appropriated, knew ourselves to be odd and marginal to Europe. This we are once again, but we don't know it. Stephen King's *It* appears in bestseller lists in both Britain and Italy, but they at least know that *It* comes from elsewhere. We now inhabit a small province inside our language, and it's about time we noticed. American cultural colonialism is invisible to us. Autonomy has nothing to do with it.

The periodicals: *Novy Mir*

Julian Graffy

Novy Mir
October 1987
183806 GSK, Moscow K-6, Maly Puzin kovsky
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The Russian magazine *Novy Mir*, describes itself as a "monthly literary-artistic and sociopolitical journal", a formulation that has hardly changed since it first appeared in 1925. More than half of each issue is devoted to the publication of prose and poetry, the bulk of it by Soviet writers. There is also literary criticism, articles on current issues in the ideological sphere, reviews of books under the subheadings "literature and art" and "politics and science", and letters from readers. But although the articles often contain significant, even daring statements (until recently usually in veiled expression), the journal's main interest lies in the prose and poetry offered in the front half.

The very name *Novy Mir*, "New World", is redolent of the aspirations of its first years of publication: the late 1920s and early 1930s saw an initial great flourishing, when contributors included Babal, Pasternak, Mayakovsky, Platonov and Pilnyak. The controls of the Stalinist period, however, meant that for the next fifteen years, like all Soviet journals, it published little of worth. *Novy Mir*'s second great period is associated with the poet Alexander Tvardovsky, who edited it from 1949 to 1954, and again from 1958 until his final outing in 1970—a period when, as is often now recalled, "every number was an event", when *Novy Mir* had no rival as the leading literary journal of its day. Tvardovsky managed to publish for the first time works of and about the great figures of Russian Modernism—Tsvetayeva, Akhmatova, Pasternak's second autobiography, Gluckov's memoir of Meyerhold—thus making them accessible to a new generation. The publication in 1965 of *Black Snow* (otherwise known as *A Theatrical Novel*) began the restoration of Bul-

gakov in Russian readers. Tvardovsky was also able to introduce a new generation which was writing about the war and post-war experience—Grossman, Voinovich, Nekrasov, Sinyavsky, and of course Alexander Solzhenitsyn, whose *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (November 1962) is the most significant publication of Tvardovsky's editorship. (No less significant, however, is the list of works *Novy Mir* was not able to publish in this period: Akhmatova's poem *Requiem*, Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*—the journal went as far as publishing a severe criticism of Pasternak in its issue for November 1958—and even Tvardovsky's own anti-Stalinist poem "By the Right of Memory".) *Novy Mir* then went through another period of decline in fortunes, when many of its most talented contributors were forced into emigration, and the content of such émigré journals as *Kontinent*, *Sinnaksis*, *Grani* and *Vremya i My* was of far greater interest than what the Soviet "thick journals" were able to offer.

However, the new cultural openness has used the literary journals as perhaps its major forum. Since October 1986 *Novy Mir* has had Sergei Zalygin as editor-in-chief. But changes are traced back to the final issues edited by Zalygin's predecessor, V. V. Karпов. Issues 6, 8 and 9 of last year saw the publication of Chingiz Aitmatov's novel *The Executioner's Black* (discussed by Katherine Clark in the TLS of June 26, 1987) and issue 9 of twenty-one poems and thirteen letters by Nikolay Gumenyuk—a major contribution to the rehabilitation of one of the first literary victims of the Soviet régime. The hallmark of Zalygin's *Novy Mir*, however, is the extraordinary richness of its literary contributions.

The process of literary relaxation has now lasted long enough for it to be possible to identify five main areas of liberalization: build new Soviet writing; works by living Soviet writers that were previously unpublished or only published abroad; works by great writers of the

early twentieth century that have never been published in the Soviet Union; works by dead émigrés; works by living émigrés. In the first four of these areas, *Novy Mir* is a journal respondent (the planned publication of poems by Joseph Brodsky will bring it into the fifth area as well). As well as *The Executioner's Black* it has published Daniil Granin's story "The Buffalo" about the geneticist Timofeyev-Resovsky (discussed by Geoffrey Hosking in the TLS of October 9-15, 1987), Mikhail Shatrov's play *The Peace of Brest-Litovsk*, and poems by Semyon Lipkin, and poems by the unofficial *Metropol* almanac in 1979. There is a fascinating long interview with the film director Aleksey German, whose work is only now being freely shown on Soviet screens.

Bulgakov has again been at the forefront of the dead writers whose works are finding their way into print. An unpublished chapter from *The White Guard* has appeared, as has an uncompleted work which forms the basis for the later *Theatrical Novel*, plus several unpublished letters. Tvardovsky's poem "By the Right of Memory" has at last been published in the journal, sixteen years after his death. Many other major writings by dead Soviet writers have appeared in *Novy Mir* this year. Of the first generation of émigrés, *Novy Mir* has published Nabokov's study *Nikolay Gogol*. Most of these works were, of course, published long ago in the West (a fact not always acknowledged in the introductions to their *Novy Mir* publications) but the importance of their publication to the Soviet readership should not be underestimated.

The latest issue of the journal to reach London, for October 1987, is remarkably rich. It begins with a serialization of Andrei Bely's novel of the life of the modern Soviet intelligentsia, *Priglasenie* (previously only published abroad, there are seven stories by the young writer Yevgeny Popov, who made his *Novy Mir* debut in 1976, but had no Soviet pub-

lication for ten years. There are posthumously published poems by Boris Slutsky, including the sardonic "About Jews", and the final part of the serialization of Ken Kesey's *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Soviet journals are nothing if not eclectic in their presentation of foreign prose: *Znamya* has just announced its menu for next year as Christa Wolf and Mario Puzo's *The Godfather*. Most important of all, there is the publication of materials about the last years of Osip Mandelstam, including the memoirs of his friend in Voronezh exile, Natalya Shtempel. Plans have already been announced for 1988, including the publication of *Doctor Zhivago*, the lodestar of this new thaw. Also scheduled is Yuri Dombrovsky's novel of the Stalinist era, *The Faculty of Unnecessary Things*; foreign works include *To the Lighthouse* and Katherine Ann Porter's *Ship of Fools*. Month by month, the criteria of openness are being met. Other Soviet journals plan publication of Zamyatin's *We* and several works by Nabokov.

Yet the publication of living émigrés remains a major barrier. Zalygin has already burnt his fingers twice in this area. In June Vladimir Voinovich, one of several émigré writers who remain decidedly sceptical about the degree of recent relaxation, published in a New York émigré newspaper his increasingly acidulous exchange of letters with Zalygin after Voinovich had provocatively decided to test the waters by offering *Novy Mir* history "By Mutual Correspondence". Before that, in March, Zalygin seemed to tell a Danish journalist that *Novy Mir* was about to publish Solzhenitsyn, only to have to make a speedy retraction. In a remarkably frank conversation with the *Komsomol* leadership at Moscow University in May, however (which by satellite channels found its way into the issue of *Encounter* for September-October 1987), editorial board member Srelyanyan insisted: "If we don't publish Solzhenitsyn in *Novy Mir*, then other magazines will."

Letters

The Dutch Golden Age

Sir, — It seems churlish to argue with Jonathan Israel's generous and appreciative review of my book *The Embarrassment of Riches* (November 20-26). But in the spirit of friendly debate I hope he will not take it amiss if I try to clarify some misunderstandings that seem to have occurred in his reading of the book.

Two of his criticisms in particular seem to be based on misconstructions of what I set out to do. The first concerns the social categories of the culture I interpret; the second the place of Calvinism in that culture.

Were my book intended as a social-history survey, then the omission of any extended discussion of the poor would indeed be a serious omission. But as I explain, on page 4 of the introduction, the book has no such pretensions. It is an attempt at the history of collective self-representation rather than the concrete reality of social experience. And it is deliberately confined to the very extensive "burgher" class of the towns because it is among the literate and the buyers of prints, genre paintings and emblem books that the attempt to create a distinctively northern Netherlands culture arose.

It would be naive to suppose there was no social conflict in the Dutch Republic. But I remain convinced that a culture that supplied identical emblem books (in duodecimo woodcut for the shopkeeper and engraved folio for the patrician) generated shared values that were likely to soften the force of those conflicts. Most of the genres I discuss—marriage manuals, patriotic anthems, disaster epics, anecdotal biographies—all presuppose a more elastic reading public than the categories of "élite" or "popular" culture can characterize.

Likewise when I wrote that Ochtersvelt's doorway scenes showed itinerant tradesman and householders "united by their acceptance of social hierarchy" I did not mean that that was actually the case, and that Dutch front stoops were peopled by forelock-tugging fruit-vendors cheerful in their deference. What I meant was that the paintings represent the edited version of social reality the artist's patrons were likely to want to see. That is the sense of my comment that the paintings represent an "insider's view of outsiders".

I am at a complete loss to understand why Professor Israel thinks that I give the impression of a Calvinist monopoly of belief in the Dutch Republic, when I say something like the exact opposite at the first point that I raise the subject (p. 59): "In many if not most respects it is a mistake to assume that the Dutch republic and orthodox Calvinism were interchangeable . . . it never succeeded in becoming the state church, still less was it a benchmark of patriotic allegiance." I certainly do believe that Calvinists aspired to dominate in the Netherlands, but that it was precisely from their failure to do so that the peculiar character of the Dutch moral code arose. That code was, perforce, one which was sufficiently flexible to appeal to the varieties of belief Professor Israel mentions and could only exert allegiance in so far as it was, in effect, supra-confessional. The Netherlands were fortunate in having exactly such a code of manners on hand already inherited from the Catholic humanist reform movement—concerning, for example, education and philanthropy. And this is why I invoke a number of instances from sixteenth-century Antwerp as direct ancestors of the seventeenth-century Dutch moral sensibility, the Reformation notwithstanding. And it is also why the work of Jan Steen, a Catholic, and Jan Lukken, a Platonist, seem to me to be as much within the mainstream of Dutch burgher culture as a Calvinist sermon.

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Ezra Pound

Sir, — K. K. Ruthven's account of Ezra Pound's entrepreneurial activities (November 20-26) states the historical evidence to fit the reductionist "Blases" of Ruthven's Marxist-feminist approach. No one should accept Ruthven's version of Pound as a phallogocentric monopolist driven by a will to power without first examining the available records of his

dealings with women writers, artists, musicians and editors: for example, Mary Barnard, Natalie Barney, Iris Barry, Raymonde Collignon, Hilda Doolittle, Katherine Ruth Heyman, Viola Baxter Jordan, Mina Loy, Harriet Monroe, Marianne Moore, Olga Rudge, Dorothy Shakespeare, May Sinclair, and—yes—Amy Lowell, Dora Marsden and Harriet Weaver. These records testify amply to Pound's disinterested generosity, though such evidence means little to a critic predisposed to see all relationships in terms of economic and sexual dominance.

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Sir, — K. K. Ruthven's questioning of Ezra Pound's integrity at the time of Imagism is probably best seen as a re-emergence and new variant of Pound's relationship with academics (mutual antagonism) mentioned by Donald Davie in his book *Pound* (1975). Davie, both poet and academic, seems in a good position to point this out.

Professor Ruthven is obviously committed to the production of the "new angle", the thesis which will be a different interpretation of accepted ideas. Once again Pound, from beyond the grave, presents a mismatch—a concern with the perceptions which stem from being a poet, a much more concrete creativity. So Pound was a successful propagandist for his prosodic beliefs . . . and, so what? He was ruthless, verged on the ruthless, or whatever . . . do we really want artists to be without the strength of feeling which might cause, though not necessarily excuse, this behaviour? Academics might fill in all the proper forms before they attack the knife in, poets are usually too busy writing poems on the back of them.

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'The Rise of English Nationalism'

Sir, — Linda Colley, defaming my book *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740-1830*, hoped to escape exposure by conceding it to be "well researched, richly suggestive and of interest to students of English Literature as well as to historians" (October 30-November 5). But this time she took the wrong pig by the tail.

My thesis (which she obscures) is that an expanding nationalist movement, originating in diverse conditions, began to emerge in the 1730s; that it found early expression in the rise of an aggressive nationalist psychology and in the literary manufacture of a concept of English national identity; that from the 1760s it helped to kindle many new inventive energies and that its study permits us to see more clearly into the deeply connected dynamics of industrialism, pre-Romanticism, democratic radicalism and Evangelicalism; that events and an army of propagandists helped to spread its influence so widely that it helped to shape many aspects of later English civilization; and that this was, in fact, though hitherto not studied, the first great nationalist movement in the world, its origins preceding the French Revolution by half a century.

Colley begins absurdly by crying that "nationalism" in this context is an anachronism. The French coined the concept during their Revolution; but it did not become common in Britain until the mid-nineteenth century. No name, ergo no thing. She thus ignores (even while filching?) my own comment, intended for undergraduates:

Of course we must remember that eighteenth-century nationalists did not recognize themselves as such (rather as "patriots" (the term "nationalism" was not even coined till the late 1790s); it is for us, studying historical patterns in retrospect, to make appropriate distinctions between the two tendencies and think out their interrelationship. (p. 163).

A second (pretendably "major") fault is that "sometimes [Newman] talks about the British, sometimes he talks about the English, and often he treats the two descriptions as though they were synonymous". Four invaluable "Blases" of Ruthven's Marxist-feminist approach. No one should accept Ruthven's version of Pound as a phallogocentric monopolist driven by a will to power without first examining the available records of his

English nationalism was certainly of the "Renewal" type and some day will doubtless be looked upon as a purer example of this even than French . . . whilst British nationalism will surely be regarded as an enlargement of English into a larger "Territorial" variety coming upon the heels of the English movement. That is, what began and flourished in England as a "Renewal" movement took on some of the features of a "Territorial" one within the British Isles . . . (p. 160).

Muddle, or malice?

Colley further asserts that "growing national sentiment in Britain was far more complex and had a far broader base of support" than I allow. (Never mind her careless use of "Britain", a trivial point.) In fact I repeatedly emphasize this complexity; but, having concocted her charge of explanatory monism, she then peppers me unashamedly with falsehoods. Newman's "most serious" flaw, she prevaricates, is that "he says nothing about religion". What about "successive wars"? And "what about George III, who proclaimed in 1760 that he gloried in the name of Britain"? No one would guess from this that I devote eleven full pages to Evangelicalism's important relation to the movement; a dozen paragraphs in how the three wars between 1756 and 1815 affected it; and some fifty or more sentences to George's complicated relationship to it, beginning unambiguously thus: "George III was the first English king in the age of nationalism, and he not only sensed the fact but welcomed it" (p. 171, and see my index).

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The British Council

Sir, — The British Council is an interesting case, to judge from the correspondence in your columns since Simon Jenkins's article, "The British Council — a case for treatment?" (November 6-12). D. J. Enright (Letters, November 13-19) sees the need for the right people on the ground abroad. John M. Mitchell (Letters, November 20-26) backs the Foreign Affairs Committee's call for a policy to support our independent, long-term view of cultural relations. We should, however, respond to the challenge of "diplomats or privatize".

Mr Jenkins is an acute diagnostician. The patient in this case is happy to receive a tonic from the physician, but fears what the surgeon's knife might do to a vigorous limb of Britain's body politic.

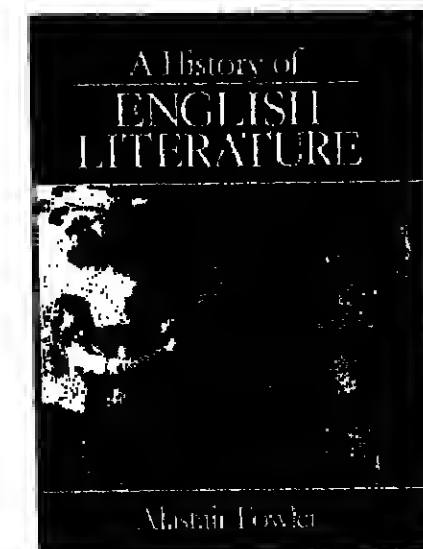
The diagnosis starts from a "unanimous view" that Britain should be adopting a more aggressive and generous cultural diplomacy" backed by adequate resources. The British Council has been saying this to the point of tedium, and the irritation of some, for many years. But it remains the central point.

To reduce the debate to financial problems is to trivialize it. The question which needs to be addressed is the imbalance in Britain's cultural relations and its effect on British influence abroad. The "British Council Ltd" is doing fine when we act as agents or can persuade others to pay for services. Self-financing activity does not, however, produce a surplus which can be spent on cultural work in countries where there is no aid programme or little chance of fee-paying clients. There is a lot of money for technical training but very little for literature, for example. The aid budget means that there is more to spend in Sierra Leone than in the Soviet Union. Gross expenditure is therefore not a true indicator of effective cultural relations and indeed obscures areas of comparative decline and pockets of neglect, especially in Eastern Europe, the Americas and newly industrializing countries.

Would things be better if cultural diplomacy were to revert completely to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the British Council were fully privatized? We have shown that we are not afraid to go into the market-place. Aid programmes and earnings are now worth more than double the Government's grant for our independent cultural-relations work. But there is a limit to what clients will pay for and already we are compared unfavourably with those who are competitors for influence who are more willing to pay for their own public relations. Left to market forces, cultural values become dis-

Continued overleaf

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COMMENTARY

Seeing not believing

Peter Hebblethwaite

RONALD HARWOOD
J. J. Farr
Phoenix Theatre

"The trouble with atheists", said a nineteenth-century Frenchman, "is that they never stop talking about God." That is certainly the trouble with Ronald Harwood's Ken Lowrie, a former Roman Catholic priest, who can talk of nothing else. His aim in life is to win over everyone to his own bleak brand of rationalistic atheism. I found that improbable for a start: priests who have lost their faith tend to regret it, and are careful not to go around undermining the faith of others.

But an even greater suspension of disbelief is needed to take the setting in which Lowrie bawls for atheism. We find ourselves in a rural hostel for priests who have lost their faith, a sort of clerical funny farm. The Warden correctly describes it as a "subsidized limbo".

None of them appears to do anything except for Denis Mulvey, a randy night-watchman. He claims that a girl he seduced after a revivifying meeting cried "Allucina!" at the point of climax. The other two are ineffectual and gay. Though Lowrie urges them to get out of the fish-bowl and "go social in the inner-city", this seems a rather dangerous suggestion. God knows what they would get up to in the inner-city.

Into this timeless world bursts J. J. Farr, another godless priest. He has written rationalist tracts with Victorian titles like *Seeing not Believing* and *After God*. He was a hero to the young Lowrie and liberated him from his superstitious fears.

But — and what drama there is turns on this — the old J. J. is no more. Captured by Muslim fundamentalists, he has been tortured and seen men tortured and killed. Among the victims of the terrorists was an Irish Jesuit, Father Linn Magee, who dies while saying Mass. J. J. hears his confession and concludes the Mass for, after all, "once a priest, always a priest". His faith is restored. Albeit Finney plays J. J. He seems fitter than a man just back from six months in terrorist lairs should be. His account of these events at the start of Act Two is moving if scatalogical. But by the end of the scene he finds himself having to mime a mystical experience. He does this by extending his hands, priestwise, and gazing ecstatically into space. The lights go out.

Lowrie is unimpressed by this alleged experience, does a parody of the Mass (for some reason in Latin, which humiliates him). J. J. drinks the bottle of wine and becomes wildly drunk in five minutes flat. Lowrie, having failed to break J. J.'s faith, naturally slashes his wrists, but he bungles his suicide as well as everything else.

J. J. is banished. His recovery of faith makes him a disruptive influence. This is tricked out with reference to the Greek custom of "ostrakon". The idea appears to be that J. J. has become too hot to handle. As he "ostracizes" J. J., the Warden memorably declares: "In this house we're moderate men or we're nothing." We are not told where J. J. goes, but surely anywhere is better than this place. Needless to say, no such home where "ex-priests can hang up their collars" exists. If it did, they would tell each other clerical jokes rather than talk about the absent God.

The fundamental misunderstanding is about the nature of the priesthood itself. Priests are less "special" than Harwood thinks. They may exchange the "piestly ministry" for other "ministries" without losing their faith, and with the blessing of the Church (though the present pope has made it harder to come by). These four club buffers enjoying their idiosyncratic country-house life appear to have no friends, no past ministry, and no relationships. This is the sort of thing that gets atheism a bad name.

Three plays by Nick Drake. *Ting Tang Mine*, *The Deal Monkey* and *Bud*. Have recently been published by Methuen (79pp. £4.95, 0 413 17930 3).

Avoiding the void

Gabriel Josipovici

SAMUEL BECKETT
Waiting for Godot
Lyttelton Theatre

"Man would sooner have the void for his purpose than be devoid of purpose," said Nietzsche, and he took it for granted that his readers would grasp the implication: in reality man just is devoid of purpose. The trouble is that while one can assent to that intellectually it is almost impossible to assent to it emotionally — which, of course, is what the aphorism says. Yet for the writer who truly does so, what is there left to do? To embody his insight in a work of art is to deny it even as he asserts it, since art means form and form means purpose. That has been the problem Beckett has struggled with from the beginning of his career, and the one he found himself finally coming to grips with in the trilogy he began to write in French after the war and his mother's death.

Waiting for Godot was written in barely three and a half months between completing the second and starting the third limb of the trilogy, and it has now acquired the status of a modern classic. But is this not a contradiction in terms? If by modern we mean taking up the challenge of Nietzsche's dictum then there is something deeply disturbing about this play of all plays being taught in schools, calling forth scholarly books and articles, and now even a fully annotated edition? The two tramps wait for Godot and talk because there is nothing else to do and no rope to hang strong enough to hang themselves with, yet the intellectual world finds a purpose by commenting on *Waiting for Godot*.

Beckett does to some extent call this down on his own head, with his title, his teasing references to Godot, and his enigmatic child popping up at the end of each act. Even if this is only parody allegory it sits uneasily with the true emotional centre of the play, which is Beckett's own sense of how the refusal of all

that normally goes into the making of plays can suddenly make the writing of a play exciting, the discovery of human possibility rather than the collusion in a lie. Pozzo and Lucky must have emerged for him as a way of filling up the time while denying purpose, and, as is the way with such things, they steal the show. For they give the audience what it wants, action, suspense, without falling into the trap of canibuting towards a plot. Yet if the tramps are too predictable, Pozzo and Lucky are perhaps too grotesque. In his later end greater plays Beckett discovered how to dispense with the likes of Didi and Gogo and also how to make more internal and realistic the tension between the one who orders and the one who obeys. *Godot* is not so much his *Hamlet* or *Lear* as his *Romeo and Juliet*, the play in which he flexed his theatrical muscles and caught the mood of a generation, even if that mood was one he had always fought against himself.

Accepting the play's classic status, Michael Rudman has tried to make each character real and distinctive. The trouble is that Alec McCowen as Didi and John Alderton as Gogo seem not so much to be distinct people as to be acting in different plays. McCowen is well-nigh perfect, playing the part with just the right mixture of pathos and Brechtian distance to make it feel wholly plausible. John Alderton has perhaps not yet fully eased himself into the role, but his cries of despair on being told he will have to wait for Godot to come sit ill with the choric momenta in which the two tramps have to play together and not against each other. Colin Welland brings out wonderfully well the repulsive smugness of Pozzo but not his dangerous quality. By contrast Peter Wright is a strange and moving Lucky, more escaped lunatic than down-trodden slave, a reading of the part which makes beautiful sense of his dance with its Aeschylean title, "the Net". The whole is played against a vast rocky landscape and a believable tree, designed by William Dudley. Classic treatment all right, and a worthy addition to the National's repertory — but ironical all the same.

expressed in his *Credo* [part of a letter to which Rice also refers], will always remain perilously poised in 'dialectical hovering' above the abyss of doubt" (vol 2, p 162). No reviewer of even moderate scrupulousness could possibly assert, as Rice has done, that I neglect the complexity of Dostoevsky's religious position.

Whenever Rice invokes my supposed opinions rather than riding his own bobby-horse (Dostoevsky's medical history) he simply paraphrases me against a fictitious author of his own creation. The only exception is when he raises a question of fact — the date of Dostoevsky's resignation from the Literary Fund. I had given 1865, but Rice refers grandly to "archival research" as proving me wrong. He may have been so carried away by his invention of a fictitious "Frank" that he just decided to invent some archives as well: the date he provides (July 1863) is completely fanciful.

Dostoevsky resigned from the Literary Fund on May 9, 1865 (*Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol 25 (2), p 123; letter to E. P. Kovalevsky). R. B. Zaborova, the Soviet Russian scholar who has done "archival research" on this matter writes: "Dostoevsky gave a good deal of time and energy to the Society in 1863-1865, when he became a member and secretary (1863) of the Executive Committee" (*Russkaya Literatura*, 3 (1975), p 162).

Rice says practically nothing at all about my third volume, which he is supposedly reviewing, and I hope that readers of the *TLS* interested in Dostoevsky will not be put off from taking a look at it by his irresponsible insinuations. They will find, if they do, that my purpose is to situate Dostoevsky, more concretely than has been done so far, in his social-cultural and literary context and among the ideological debates of the early 1860s, so important for his great novels.

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COMMENTARY

Dark satanic subjects

Stephen Daniels

Hard Times: Social Realism in Victorian Art
Manchester City Art Gallery, until January 10

The Manchester City Art Gallery presently displays two sides of Victorian art. Its permanent collection, notably its High Renaissance and Pre-Raphaelite paintings, is luminously presented on the upper floors of Barry's richly restored main building; in contrast, its more dismal exhibition gallery around the corner is now packed with paintings of abject poverty: starving seamstresses, exhausted sweeps, shivering tramps, battered wives, grieving widows, dying waifs. The director of the City Art Galleries sees *Hard Times*, this first exhibition of Victorian social realist art, as part of the "Post-Modernist Movement" [which] is exploring once again figurative subject-matter and earthly fatalities". The City Councillor who opened the show welcomed the disclosure of the underside of the Victorian values presently trumpeted by central government. In his catalogue the exhibition organizer, Julian Treuherz, resists the kind of political interpretation these pictures have recently received, as images which, no less than low wages or the workhouse, are an imposition by one class upon another. While emphasizing the conventional aspects of the pictures — their relation to artistic traditions, literary sources and developments in illustrated journalism — Treuherz inclines to the view they question the cultural status quo by their painful accuracy and social conscience.

The exhibition and catalogue entries present a familiar narrative of social realism, tracing some roots in the paintings of outcasts by Richard Redgrave and G. F. Watts, exploring the formative influence of the *Graphic* and then concentrating on the work of Frank Holl, Hubert van Herk, Homer and Luke Fildes, the major figures who made their mark as illustrators for that periodical. This strain is then seen to attenuate in English art but to strengthen on the Continent. In particular, the *Graphic* illustrations are seen to provide the sinews of Van Gogh's later style: the climax of the show is one of Van Gogh's studies of a pair of boots. In his catalogue essay Peter Keating offers an alternative history. He emphasizes the English pedigree of *Graphic*-style social realism and

how it looked forward to the sensibility of such writings as Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People of London* (1889): "Quite suddenly the philanthropically appealing character types have gone, leaving, as it were, groups in isolation. The poor are now distanced, objectified, on their way to becoming sociological statistics in the new democracy." If the ruling classes are represented it is usually by the police, about to move on a sleeping chimney-sweep in Thomas Faed's "Homeless", supervising visiting in Holl's "Committed for Trial", directing casual ward applicants in Fildes's "Houseless and Hungry" and fixing some homeless people in a beam of torchlight in Gustave Doré's "The Bull's Eye". The police are "the new professional agents of control" among whom we could also count prison warders, park-keepers, school teachers and social statisticians. In 1861, the *Illustrated London News* published an engraving almost identical to "The Bull's Eye", not of the police but of the census enumerators shining their torch on some homeless underneath the eaves of the Adelphi.

Conspicuously absent from this exhibition are the industrial working class. They are rare in Victorian painting, but they did feature in illustrated journalism. During the Cotton Famine the *Illustrated London News* published a full-page, frieze-like illustration of out-of-work mill operatives in Manchester. They strike the familiar social-realist poses — resolute men, resigned women, wan children — against a bleak backdrop of darkened mills; as on a census form, against each of the sixteen figures is listed his or her occupation. The picture illustrated an article explaining the orderly hierarchy of a cotton mill and appealing for aid so that the magistrates would not "have to deal with a starving and mutinous population".

The only painting in the exhibition of a factory setting is Eyre Crowe's "The Dinner Hour, Wigan" (1874) and this seems to me, for many reasons, to be the most intriguing. It is as stately as the Cotton Famine illustration but now the background mills are conspicuously working and brightly lit and the frieze of figures is not a stratified sample of the mill population but a group of colourfully dressed female operatives, mainly weavers, relaxing during their lunch hour — eating, drinking, chatting, one reading a letter, one throwing an apple. In its review the *Athenaeum* thought "it was a pity Mr Crowe wasted his time on such unattractive



"The Dinner Hour, Wigan" by Eyre Crowe, from the exhibition reviewed here.

materials" and, because the reviewer preferred a more grimy scene by Crowe of a spoil tip with women and children grovelling for coal, his implication must be that there is nothing in "The Dinner Hour" to attract the charitable sympathy of the spectator. Perhaps there is something voyeuristic about the painting of plump bare arms but the women seem quite unimpressed by any spectator. Each is absorbed in what she is doing; the glance that one woman does cast towards the spectator seems unfattering, and she continues to confide in her companion. There is a figure of authority, a policeman, at the apex of the composition but, looking away, he is evidently not controlling anything in the scene. The caption to the painting in this exhibition finds "The Dinner Hour" neither "romantic, topographical nor narrative: it is presented without comment".

But there are surely narrative implications in a variety of incidents — from the letter-reading in the foreground to the action of two women in the background, one of whom seems to be courting, the other giving something to an elderly man. Unlike Fildes's contemporary "Applications for Admission to a Casual Ward", it is hard to work out what these stories are. The *Graphic* had already provided figure

histories for the illustration on which that painting is based. Fildes offers a more legible and direct relation than Crowe between institution, police presence and the group of figures. What makes a connection between "The Casuals" and "The Dinner Hour" still more curious is that the purchaser of the former, Thomas Taylor, owned the Victoria Mills in Wigan shown in the left in "The Dinner Hour". The catalogue speculates that Crowe was hoping to sell the painting to Taylor but, if so, "he failed, for the picture was not sold and remained on the artist's hands".

Crowe is one of the few painters in the exhibition who establish a relation between urban figures and urban setting, but this only serves to make his art more enigmatic. A painting of 1881 shows another lunch-break scene of sandwich men, some ex-soldiers, advertising art shows in the military-imperial setting of Trafalgar Square. Another of 1887 shows convicts doing building work in Portsmouth supervised by uniformed officers, the whole scene spied upon unobserved by a woman peeping through a fence. Crowe slips through the prevailing sensibilities of social realism and as such he emerges as much the most intriguing of the artists on show.

Letters

Continued from page 1651

tories. Britain must get the balance right or we will defeat our own purpose.

Can we assume that cultural work would enjoy more clout if it were part of the FCO's direct responsibilities? We already work closely with FCO colleagues who are pursuing their aims under similar constraints. Our quarrel is not with them but with the British ethos that undervalues our culture and takes for granted the good opinion of foreigners. That is why there are few votes in cultural relations and it is a poor claimant for public funds. Compare the situation in France, where culture is the stuff of politics, or Germany, where the value of the Goethe Institut is taken for granted.

What effect might direct FCO control have on the credibility of Britain's cultural relations? Jenkins too easily dismisses the value of the British Council as an "arm's-length" public body. The Foreign Affairs Committee put it this way: "Britain is fortunate that the organisations principally concerned with cultural diplomacy are perceived to be free of government influence" and echoed the 1981 review of the British Council by Lord Seehouses: "it is the Council's strength that it is regarded overseas primarily as a cultural, non-political organisation". We combine a public-service ethos with independent views and entrepreneurial skills. We may serve the same ultimate ends as diplomats, but the British Council's work needs people with different abilities, experience and motivation, and it is guided by an autonomous Board and specialist advisers.

Jenkins acknowledges the British Council's ability to measure whatever can be measured in terms of objectives and effectiveness, but pours polite scorn on the call for the overseas representation of British cultural values "for their own sake", which was supported unequivocally by the Foreign Affairs Committee. We are glad to be praised as "model Thatcherites" but make no apology for muscular

idealism. The talk (and demonstrable achievement) of "return on investment" is fine, but the idea that the spread of British concepts of freedom and tolerance, and the sharing of values, experience and enjoyment through professional exchanges and intellectual encounter are worthwhile activities in themselves is "blindingly obvious" to many.

In spite of the intellectual elegance and the practical challenge of Simon Jenkins's thesis, we see no advantage to Britain in handing over cultural relations entirely either to the FCO or to market forces. Independent and influential thinkers on successive British Council Boards have over the years fought for the Council's autonomy and for adequate resources to serve the national interest as they see it. It may be that the Council will be forced by a declining grant to become even more dependent on its sponsors, both commercial and governmental. If so, there is no doubt that the balance of our cultural representation would be further distorted, with serious consequences for Britain's reputation overseas.

MICHAEL BARRETT
British Council, 10 Spring Gardens, London SW1

Dostoevsky in the 1860s

Sir, — Writing a letter to protest about an unfavourable review is a thankless task, and, never having done so before, I embark on it with great reluctance. But the review of the third volume of my work on Dostoevsky by James L. Rice (October 30-November 3) really exceeds the boundaries of the tolerable. It is one thing to be criticized, however sharply and perhaps unfairly, by a critic with an opposing point of view on key questions. It is quite another when the critic takes one's own ideas and expresses them as criticism of the books in which they appear, while misleading the reader into believing that the critic is

offering an independent and superior point of view. This is precisely what Rice has done, and I simply cannot let pass in silence the mendaciousness of his procedure. Let me offer only two examples.

1. Rice rejects the notion that Dostoevsky went through a "conversion experience" in his Siberian prison-camp, as I had maintained, and argues that the "Muzhik Marey" article "on which Frank bases much of his case has profoundly different variants in Dostoevsky's notebook and collateral texts" (what on earth are these?) There are, in fact, no variants that make any difference, but this is a minor matter. For Rice then continues: "Furthermore, the change Dostoevsky describes in 'Marey' is one of the psyche and of class-consciousness, not of religious conviction as Frank concludes."

Let an impartial reader judge the accuracy of this assertion. "What occurred to Dostoevsky, then," I wrote, "bears all the earmarks of a genuine conversion experience; and it also involves, as we see, a recovery of faith. But it is not faith in God or Christ that is in question; rather, it is a faith in the Russian common people as, in some sense, the human image of Christ" (vol 2, p 126). Rice has simply taken my own point and pretended that I said the very opposite.

2. Continuing to object to my presumptive overly "religious" interpretation of Dostoevsky, Rice writes, as if to correct my perspective: "Whenever he wrote about faith or Christ, whether in fiction, journalism, letters, or notebooks, Dostoevsky left loop-holes for doubt, reason, and even 'truth'." Any reader would assume that I thought differently. In fact, however, I cite Kierkegaard on this point, and I apply to Dostoevsky his definition of faith as "subjective certainty". What this means is "objective uncertainty". "What this means is 'objective uncertainty'. "No better description," I said, "can be given of the faith that is the basis of Dostoevsky's work." Rice writes, as if to correct my perspective:

expressed in his *Credo* [part of a letter to which Rice also refers], will always remain perilously poised in 'dialectical hovering' above the abyss of doubt" (vol 2, p 162). No reviewer of even moderate scrupulousness could possibly assert, as Rice has done, that I neglect the complexity of Dostoevsky's religious position.

Whenever Rice invokes my supposed opinions rather than riding his own bobby-horse (Dostoevsky's medical history) he simply paraphrases me against a fictitious author of his own creation. The only exception is when he raises a question of fact — the date of Dostoevsky's resignation from the Literary Fund. I had given 1865, but Rice refers grandly to "archival research" as proving me wrong. He may have been so carried away by his invention of a fictitious "Frank" that he just decided to invent some archives as well: the date he provides (July 1863) is completely fanciful.

Dostoevsky resigned from the Literary Fund on May 9, 1865 (*Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol 25 (2), p 123; letter to E. P. Kovalevsky). R. B. Zaborova, the Soviet Russian scholar who has done "archival research" on this matter writes: "Dostoevsky gave a good deal of time and energy to the Society in 1863-1865, when he became a member and secretary (1863) of the Executive Committee" (*Russkaya Literatura*, 3 (1975), p 162).

Rice says practically nothing at all about my third volume, which he is supposedly reviewing, and I hope that readers of the *TLS* interested in Dostoevsky will not be put off from taking a look at it by his irresponsible insinuations. They will find, if they do, that my purpose is to situate Dostoevsky, more concretely than has been done so far, in his social-cultural and literary context and among the ideological debates of the early 1860s, so important for his great novels.

JOSEPH FRANK
Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey 08540

Unassuming Englishmen

David Nokes

The Fortunes of War
BBC
The Chatterer
LWT

Running back-to-back on Sunday evenings for most of October and November, two drama series offered very different pictures of English values in the years before and during the Second World War. *The Fortunes of War* was epic both in scale and outlook, tracing a pattern of parallels between the fates of individuals and the destinies of nations. The shifting ties of personal relationships, the intimate alternations of love and jealousy, confidence and betrayal, became metaphors for the rise and fall of empires as yesterday's heroic allies were transformed into today's Imperialist aggressors. *The Chatterer* took a narrower and more cynical view of the artifice of deception. It offered a voyeuristic glimpse through the lace curtains of suburbia, revealing a private world of sexual frustrations, loneliness and domestic cruelty. Part of the appeal of the former came from a kind of moral nostalgia, a hankering after an era of liberal humanist heroism when a production of Shakespeare in a beleaguered foreign capital could seem an appropriately heroic gesture of defiance against the threat of advancing German troops. The appeal of the latter was more insidious, fostering a morally ambiguous fascination with its source of revenge.

The Fortunes of War, based on Olivia Manning's Balkan and Levant trilogies, was a lavish, even opulent production, yet for once the delight in period artefacts and the grand tour of exotic locations were more than mere surface effects. An atmosphere of old-world romance was created by misty shots of ancient locomotives billowing smoke and wreathed in steam; by gleaming Hispano-Suiza cars, and by the palm-court orchestras playing in the lobbies of imperial hotels, where impecunious émigré aristocrats sat constellated about the table like wax-work figures from the Almanach de Gotha. Every polished surface and crumbling edifice contributed to an elusive moral iconography, evoking a world both dignified and absurd, corrupt yet humane, a world on the brink of extinction from the blitzkrieg of totalitarianism. At times in the later episodes the epic tour of locations seemed indulgent and meandering, arousing a sense of déjà vu as we watched the same faces in the same places, the same faces of locations seemed indulgent and meandering, arousing a sense of déjà vu as we watched the same faces in the same places, the same faces of locations seemed indulgent and meandering, arousing a sense of déjà vu as we watched the same faces in the same places.

Alan Prior's adaptation of Patrick Hamilton's unfinished trilogy *The West Pier, Mr Simpson and Mr Gorse and The Unknown Assassin* was less concerned with literary fidelity than with televisual excitement. *The Fortunes of War* retained an essentially literary quality, transforming the accidents of history into a broad humanist myth. *The Chatterer* revealed in its own seductive shallowness, with a style that was all veneer. Simplified into a psychological duel between Gorse (Nigel Havers), the sadistic playboy and Simpson (Bernard Hepton), the grim-faced agent of retribution, the series had the compulsive fascination of a bullfight, though in the end it was Gorse, the twirling matador who perished.

The train taking him to his terminus on the gallows was one indication of the difference of scale and focus of the two series. Whereas the

BBC's train was atmospherically and expensively filmed in motion, the train in LWT's more tightly budgeted series was never seen to move; instead it became a symbol for the fantasy of escape, its narrow, crowded corridors serving as a final social prison.

Perhaps the most telling contrast between the two series lay in their portraits of two beguiling opportunists. The show-stealing star of *The Fortunes of War* was Ronald Pickup as Prince Yakimov, the crumpled and penniless patrician, half Irish and half Russian, charmingly indolent and an incorrigible scrounger. Pickup's performance was a constant delight, conveying a tone of rueful optimism and dignified selfishness in every listless phrase and grand gesture. In the novel Yakimov appears a less engaging figure than in Plotov's adaptation, more cynical in his strategems, less ingenious in his double-dealing. In the television version Pickup maintained an authentic air of injured innocence while defrauding his hosts and betraying his friends. His combination of mid-world charm and con-man's tricks beautifully encapsulated the production's humane sense of tolerance. Nigel Havers's charm was a more deadly kind: his film-star looks and the mesmerizing stare of his steel blue eyes belonged to the world of the screen with its charm schools and matinee idols. The killing of Yakimov, shot for the insouciant gesture of lighting a cigarette in the blackout, was an ironically effective version of the death of Innocence. The execution of Gorse represented the revenge of an outraged puritanism on a showman's dangerous spells.

John Coates

COMMENTARY

Becoming the voyeur's accomplices

Stephen Wall

SHAKESPEARE
Cymbeline
The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon

Cymbeline is the second Shakespeare play this season to be staged at one of Stratford's smaller venues (*Titus Andronicus* is still in repertory at the Swan). No doubt both plays seem commercially too risky for the main house at the moment, but it would be a pity if these and other less popular titles were to be permanently relegated to a second division. Neither the Swan, for all its charm, nor the intimacy of The Other Place could have contained Olivier's legendary Titus or, perhaps, have done justice to the young Vanessa Redgrave's radiant Imogen. Nevertheless, Bill Alexander's obviously low-budget production of *Cymbeline* works remarkably well in its minimalist way, and it makes one think again about the relationship between the play's dramatic style and the Blackfriars theatre which Shakespeare's company took over not long before its composition.

The only eye witness account of the original *Cymbeline* is of a performance at the Globe, and it's clear that like the other late romances it was meant to beactable at both theatres. All

the same, Shakespeare's supremely practical temperament must have been intrigued by the new possibilities offered by indoor staging and a much reduced and socially more select audience. As Andrew Gurr stresses in his recent book on playgoing in Shakespeare's time, the best and most expensive seats at the Blackfriars were those nearest the stage – the reverse of the Globe situation. The new RSC *Cymbeline* is sufficiently effective when viewed at close quarters to make one wonder whether Shakespeare was deliberately trying to see how far the collusion between actors and audience that a smaller auditorium encourages could be exploited. The plot of *Cymbeline*, and particularly its famously protracted dénouement (which irritated Shaw so much that he rewrote it), have often been thought of as theatrical liabilities; what we see at The Other Place suggests that the play not only stands close inspection but might have been made for it.

Admittedly, its spectacular elements – the Romano-British battle and the appearance of Jupiter – can hardly make their full effect in such conditions. Bill Alexander copes with the first by adopting the now commonly used device of the fewer the actors on stage, the louder the sound-track off it. The masque, however, looks distinctly underfunded. Otherwise, the restricted acting area – the play is virtually alone in the round – promotes an

absorption in the story which precludes any sustained detachment from its lusty anthology of romance motifs – long-lost children, identifying moles, wicked stepmothers, decoded riddles, and so on. This high level of attention is thoroughly earned by the cast, who play the piece without a hint of patronage and with an attack that may sometimes override the qualities of the verse but which ensures that we don't hold the elaborations of the plot against the characters but suffer its twists and turns with them.

Imogen – the Oxford editors' restoration of the heroine's name to "Innogen" is not taken up – is at the heart of the play: her chaste but loyal conjugal love was much admired by Tennyson and other susceptible Victorians. Harriet Walter's performance is perfectly modern in tone, but it conveys without embarrassment Imogen's capacity to rebuke desire while inadvertently provoking it, and does so with a fierce if sometimes breathless intensity. This earns its reward in the treacherous scene in which Innogen revives from drugged sleep to find herself alongside what appears to be the headless body of her husband. Imogen's physical shock and brief lapse into a stunned childishness are fearlessly registered, even though the smallness of the audience makes its reaction easier to control than it would be in a larger house. Proximity to the action also

strengthens the scene where Iachimo climbs out of his hellish trunk, and itemizes the details of Imogen's bedroom and her sleeping person; the audience can hardly help becoming the voyeur's accomplices.

Subtly played by Donald Sumpter, Iachimo emerges as a man with something of Iago's skill in playing on that inability to reconcile women's sexuality with their virtue that underlies Othello. It is easy to see, too, in Nicholas Farrell's intelligently spoken Postumus, a Leontes-like devotion to – and doubt of – his wife which reminds us that *Cymbeline* is contemporary with *The Winter's Tale*. The props which signify the conflict of wills between the two men – the ring and the bracelet – tell strongly as betraying objects because they are undeniably there under our noses – as indeed is the corpse of the decapitated Cloten, whose manic bluster is energetically projected by Bruce Alexander. Because we are throughout so near, physically and emotionally, to performances like these which patently respect the characters' integrity, the long tight-rope of the last scene – with its intensely moving moments of reunion and its comically pedantic insistence on tying up loose ends – can be negotiated securely. In the last moments the whole company is brought into an inward-facing and harmonious circle – which because of the intimate theatrical space, we too feel drawn into.

Second-Empire sensations

David Kelley

ÉMILE ZOLA
Nana
Adapted by Olwen Wymark
Almeida Theatre

There is a distinctly theatrical side to Zola's *Nana*. The opening scene is set in the theatre, where the heroine makes her début in the role of Venus – forcefully, perhaps too forcefully, emphasizing the extent to which, in Second Empire society, both art and eroticism have been trivialized and transformed into prostitution. But the novel is also constructed as a series of set-piece tableaux, rather in the way in which a play by Molière or Shakespeare is constructed, though with little regard for narrative development or coherence – perhaps suggesting the arbitrary lack of system in the life of the heroine – so that it would continue to make sense if one or more of the scenes were cut.

It nevertheless requires something of a *tour de force* to make out of it a convincing dramatic presentation for a small theatre company. *Nana*'s supper scene itself could fill an evening, and the famous racecourse scene would really need Cecil B. De Mille and a supporting cast of thousands to do it justice.

Olwen Wymark's adaptation for the Shared Experience company, directed by Jane Gibson and Sue Lefton, nearly succeeds in that *tour de force*. There is no attempt at naturalistic detail – partly because the adaptation hints at relationships between the superficially glittering, but profoundly corrupt, society of Second Empire France and present-day Britain. The costumes play up contemporary nostalgia for past style. The women wear the updated Victorian underwear which it has nowadays become possible to wear in the street; the men variations in nineteenth-century formal dress, lent a modern designer informality by the absence of a jacket. The set-piece scenes of Zola's novel are simplified and stylized, sometimes merely alluded to, sometimes cutting into each other. Excellent use is made of dance and of music – ironic echoes of Chopin, Offenbach, etc. In Anthony Jangle's score – to punctuate the action, and to point the contrasts and contacts between society and the *demi-monde*.

In general it works very well, particularly perhaps the first half of the play. The second half becomes slightly breathless in the attempt not least to allude to all the episodes of the novel. The scene of the race, for example, which in the novel both reveals the disordered complications of Nana's life and marks the high point of her celebrity, is with admirable restraint

the crowds cheer on the racehorse bearing her name, gets about fifteen seconds and appears strangely irrelevant.

And there are, throughout, discordant notes. Having Georges, the adolescent blade besotted by Nana to the point of suicide, wear short trousers is simply silly. There are also bits of theatrical bravura which appear gratuitous. Why nuke a different actress play the part of Nana, with the courtesan Nana sexily posed to the background, in the episode in which she disastrously tries out a non-mercenary relationship?

The fact that the adaptation and the direction are by women gives an interestingly different slant to things. In Zola's novel the prurient male fascination with female sexuality which erodes the upper classes of the Second Empire, in the figure of Count Muffat, is perceived, with critical complicity, from the inside, but with a sympathetic understanding of Nana's aspirations, motivations and contradictions. Here it is shown from the outside, in a sometimes too sharply feminist perspective, as in the scene where the girls, grouped round Nana, shriek out their victimized contempt for male sexuality. And Nana's attempted idyll with Fontan is presented without complexity, as being simply violent and exploitative on his part and masochistic on hers.

The criticisms made here are perhaps carping. They are compensated for by the energy and vitality of the whole. Belinda Davidson as Nana dominates the acting. Her vulgar sexiness, stylish cynicism, childish peevishness and nostalgia for an innocence which Nana has never known, capture the range and complexity necessary for the depiction of Zola's heroine. But the other members of the cast, in their quick changes and multiple roles, admirably complement her. The Shared Experience version of *Nana* is lively and intelligent, as theatre and as adaptation of an important French novel.

Mothuen's Swan Theatre Plays series now includes *The New Inn* by Ben Jonson (56pp, Paperback £3.95, 0 413 16630 9). In addition to the text of the play with notes on how it was adapted for performance, the book contains a cast list, photographs from Swan Theatre productions, and a critical commentary by Simon Trussler. Other titles in the series are *The Revenger's Tragedy* by Cyril Tournear (0 413 16630 4), *Hyde Park* by James Shirley (0 413 16630 7), *The Rover* by Aphra Behn (0 413 40550 8), *Two Noble Kinsmen* by William Shakespeare and John Fletcher (0 413 40550 3), *Every Man In His Humour* by Ben Jonson (0 413 40540 0) and *A Fair Maid of the West* by Thomas Heywood (0 413 40550 X).

Entrenched positions

Andrew Sherratt

PETER UCKO
Academic Freedom and Apartheid: The story of the World Archaeological Congress
305pp, Duckworth. £18 (paperback, £9.95). 0 7156 2180 7

Just over a year ago, British archaeologists and their international colleagues went through an experience which, with hindsight, is remarkably reminiscent of the more recent history of the SDP. An attempt to break the mould of world archaeology ended by breaking the archaeological community itself. A broad coalition of related interests split into opposing factions – divided only partly by differences in their objectives, more immediately by the issues of practical politics. The occasion was the World Archaeological Congress; the issue was the banning of South African participants.

Although now global in scope, archaeology began in Europe. By late Victorian times prehistoric archaeology had successfully established itself as a science by combining prehistory with the study of world ethnography – "primitive" peoples around the world were seen as corresponding early stages in a sequence of development like that of prehistoric Europe itself. One hallmark of the scientific status of the subject was an international conference: the Congrès international d'anthropologie et d'archéologie préhistoriques which met regularly in different European capitals. This model survived into the twentieth century, until the anthropologists grew unhappy in an association which cast them in the role of embroidering a tale told by prehistorians – their growing body of knowledge and more active links with the social sciences led them to break away in 1934. The archaeologists in reply founded the International Congress (since 1955 the International Union) of Prehistoric

and Protohistoric Sciences – more conveniently abbreviated as IUPPS. Its quinquennial meeting provided academics with an opportunity for international travel, which was especially valuable after the war for East Europeans; and it was an (often justified) occasion for national pride on the part of the host country, expressed in useful handbooks and exhibitions. The outlook of the Congress, however, having lost the anthropologists, was even more firmly Eurocentric than before. Its interests became formalized into twenty Commissions, mostly defined by their concern with a particular period and area. This effectively removed one of the main objectives of a world congress – to overcome parochialism.

When Britain was asked to host the 1986 congress, the British members of the permanent council approached Peter Ucko to organize it – as one of the few senior archaeologists with experience of work in other continents. His goal was to restore a genuinely global view, taking account of the important progress made in the world outside Europe and North America, the renewed interest of prehistorians in anthropological approaches, and the long-term shift from "expeditionary" archaeology to local work carried out by indigenous archaeologists. So the eleventh meeting of the IUPPS was to be the World Archaeological Congress.

The intentions were admirable; but the obstacles were formidable. World conferences are a hard genre in which to succeed – the corresponding anthropological conference in Vancouver in 1983 was an academic shambles and a financial disaster. Memories of lavish French (government) hospitality to the ninth IUPPS congress at Nice in 1976 were to be no guide to reality in Mrs Thatcher's Britain a decade later. A congress registration fee of £200 (not including accommodation and travel) was necessary – enough to deter many without generous institutional support. And a

programme whose list of themes was led by "Cultural attitudes to animals, including birds, fish and invertebrates" was not calculated to reassure traditionalist supporters of the Congress.

In the event, however, it was a quite different factor which was fundamentally to affect its character. The conference was to be held in Southampton, mostly in the premises of the University; and the local students' union, backed by the Association of University Teachers and the City Council, refused to allow any archaeologist from South Africa to participate and threatened to make the Congress unworkable if those already invited were to attend. Professor Ucko was not unsympathetic to the demand, seeing it as firmly nailing the congress flag to the anti-colonialist cause, and leading to "much more the sort of meeting in which I was interested". Others disagreed: the South African archaeologists were not national delegates, and many had a distinguished history of resistance to the apartheid régime. Nevertheless, to avoid conflict, a ban was imposed. The decision to exclude individuals solely on the ground of their nationality caused leading members of the committee to resign, sponsors to withdraw their support, and the IUPPS council to withdraw its recognition of the Congress as a meeting under its auspices. With a reconstituted organizing committee, preparations went ahead for a World Archaeological Congress; and it took place in September 1986. The IUPPS convened its own eleventh Congress along conventional lines in Mainz a year later – with Ucko leading demonstrations on the streets outside.

His book *Academic Freedom and Apartheid*

Rustlers of ruins

Paul G. Bahn

BRUCE NORMAN
Footsteps: Nine archaeological journeys of romance and discovery
279pp, BBC Books. £14.95.
0 563 20552 0

The BBC's predilection for incestuous practices has reached some sort of peak in this handsome volume and the equally pretty series of televised travelogues which it accompanies: for *Footsteps* is clearly a hybrid of *Explorers*, *Great River Journeys* and the *In Search of...* series. There are also unintentional echoes of Terry Jones and Michael Palin's *Across the Andes by Frog*.

The book has been written by Bruce Norman, the executive producer, rather than by David Drew, the presenter of the programmes, who merely provides a two-page introduction on the thrills and spills of the Golden Days of Archaeology. However, Norman does a fine job, and covers all the main points mentioned in each programme, together with some background information and descriptions, and frequent lengthy quotations from the writings of the various explorers.

Footsteps is long on history and short on archaeology. As suggested by its subtitle, each tale is a blend of arduous exploration, the times and exotic settings in which the travels took place, and the impressive ancient monuments the travellers discovered or saw. Geographically, we get an even scatter – North, Central and South America, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Turkey, Jordan, India and Thailand – and one or two lesser-known examples have been selected in addition to old chestnuts, such as Belzoni in Egypt and Bingham at Machu Picchu.

Through its content and the occasional stubble on the chin of its ever-present frontman, *Footsteps* promotes the image of the archaeologist as Indiana Jones, facing a multitude of perils in strange lands with courage and defiance, all for the sake of bringing home new information and, in a few cases, some impressive relics. This image is irritating to many present-day scholars, but at the same time they see its positive aspects: archaeology today relies almost totally on public goodwill and funding, and if the public prefers its vision of the past to be served up with romance and derring-do, then so be it. Nevertheless, one

is a detailed personal account of his involvement in these events, studied with thumb-nail character sketches and quotations from letters written – not, presumably, in expectation of publication – by those involved. It leaves one in no doubt of its author's passionate and sincere commitment to his point of view; and of his difficulty in understanding that of others. "Why are such people defying the United Nations?" he remarks at one point of academics reluctant to follow his example. It shows how a difference of opinion over a political issue of largely symbolic importance can divide a community along unexpected lines. Organizationally, archaeologists are now polarized into upholders of the traditional IUPPS (which refuses to ban participants on grounds of nationality) and supporters of the WAC (which refuses to accept South Africans). Those who believe that the IUPPS is an inadequate vehicle for world archaeology, but believe that it is crucially important to support South African archaeologists in their task of opposing the colonialist myths about their country's past, are now left homeless.

The book is not, in fact, about academic freedom and apartheid (the moral arguments are assumed rather than examined); it is rather the story of a sad chapter in the recent history of archaeology which has done little good to the subject as a whole. A pessimist might remark that while archaeology has been gravely damaged, apartheid has been relatively unscathed by the experience. What we should perhaps learn is that world conferences are more important for their symbolic than their scientific value. They are now a hostage to fortune for any academic subject.

would have thought that a BBC 2 audience would have outgrown that stage.

What is slightly more worrying about the book is its inherent attitude that the nine heroes (no heroines other than a couple of plucky wives tagging along) were the good guys, and their rivals – especially the French in the case of Belzoni – the bad. The French point of view is no doubt somewhat different. The same probably applies to those Arabs, Turks, etc. who were tiresome enough to hinder the explorers from doing (or removing) whatever they liked.

The book is also a little uneven in its handling of more recent events. In some chapters we are told quite a lot about what has been learned about the relevant cultures through subsequent archaeological work; in others very little. Predictably enough, full treatment is given to the political use made by white colonists of the legends concerning Great Zimbabwe and its supposedly non-African builders. Yet other issues are ignored, even though, unlike that of Zimbabwe, they are increasingly causing problems. I am thinking in particular of the ethical dilemma posed by plundered objects in great museums. The Elgin Marbles are the perennial favourites, but there are many other contested objects from a number of countries. One case of special relevance here is that of the richly carved lintels which Alfred Maudslay removed from the Mayan site of Yaxchilan in the 1880s. The book merely describes the physical difficulties of removing and transporting one to the British Museum. It does not mention the fact that the Mexican authorities are actively seeking the return of these lintels and are appealing to the "moral sense" of the British Museum. It seems that a Mexican law, existing in Maudslay's time, prohibited the export of pre-Hispanic treasures.

The book is strong on old illustrations taken from the various explorers' writings, and pictures of relevant places taken at roughly the right period. For photographs, however, it relies on run-of-the-mill snapshots of the main monuments. It would have been interesting, useful and certainly in keeping with the historical bent of the series to link the past with the present more effectively by placing the old illustrations side by side with the same views today; in order to show how things have changed, or (in Seely's case, for example) to assess how inaccurate or approximate his representations really were. Nevertheless, *Footsteps* forms a very readable and attractively packaged glossy volume for the layman.

THE FOLKLORE SOCIETY
c/o University College, London, WC1E 6BT
wishes to congratulate
PROF. AMY SHUMAN
Birkbeckian Institution, Washington, USA
WINNER
of the
1987 KATHARINE BRIDGE FOLKLORE AWARD
for her book *Storytelling Rights*
(Cambridge University Press)

Cleaning and sharpening

David Pocock

RODNEY NEEDHAM
Counterpoints
251pp. Berkeley: University of California
Press, \$30.
052008356

A shoe-box in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, is stuffed, I am told, with letters to Sir James Frazer from contemporary admirers of *The Golden Bough*, testifying in the effect of that remarkable work on a general reading public. For Frazer's contemporaries it was an important revelation that there was one human and universal mind at work in all the wonderful differences and, as it seemed to them, levels of human culture. The moral duty and the intellectual challenge then had to be the exploration of this human mind.

Rodney Needham works in the field so grandly indicated by Frazer, but I cannot imagine that he receives many letters from the general public thanking him for illuminating their view of humanity. Even among his colleagues in this country the full recognition of his achievement, developed over a quarter of a century, has been delayed. Partly, perhaps, they are haunted by the breadth of his range of reference and his invitation to a more arduous task than is indicated by a rather narrow sociological, but it is impossible to think that Needham's clear and unwavering view of the

central tasks of anthropology, his unequalled performance of them, and the pertinence of his findings to all the varied investigations of humanity, will not finally have its proper influence.

The encounter with another culture spontaneously engenders comparison through contrast; comparison, then, is not something that an anthropologist may or may not do: it cannot be avoided. Yet many academic anthropologists misconceive their subject and imagine that somehow it is possible to describe and analyse culture independently of comparison.

Needham's work is comparative at every step. He is peculiarly aware of the need to interrogate constantly the concepts we use in explicating other cultures: "Again and again it has been found that enquiries have been misdirected by an uncritical reliance on ordinary words... the interpretation of alien concepts has made necessary a parallel elucidation of the words in our own language that we take to be equivalent, and these... have usually turned out to be imprecise." I don't think any anthropologist could deny the truth of this, but in Needham's work its implications are fully recognized and implemented by rigorous analysis. His purpose is to clean and sharpen, and sometimes discard, the concepts used in analysis, but a valuable by-product for any reader is the heightened sensitivity to the ways in which we misrepresent our own reality in ourselves by the unreflective use of words. Needham's *Belief, Language, and Experience*

was devoted to an examination of the word "belief", a concept used freely by anthropologists to describe states of mind in other cultures. His detailed demonstration of its unsuitability was not only hygienic for the discipline but also salutary for the non-specialist reader, who was enriched by a deeper understanding of what it might mean to say "I believe".

Counterpoints has for frontpiece a Steinberg cartoon, and it concludes with an enigmatic quotation from *Waiting for Godot*. It is an examination of the concept "opposition" (as in "the opposition of concepts"), which has been a jargon term in anthropology for forty years or more, and widely used since the impact of what passed for structuralism in this country. Needham investigates the linked assumptions that we know what we mean by the word and that it is a reliable term in analysis. The demonstration that we do not, and that it is not, is lucid, disconcerting but convincing. Its author suggests that the hook may be found "rather forbidding and specialized". I don't think so. Chapters Seven and Eight certainly require knowledge of essays edited by Needham under the title *Right and Left* but the general reader will not be sorry for the introduction to that interesting symposium on symbolic classification. More generally, it is useful for anyone to reflect systematically on the powerful tendency in daily life of our minds to oppose concepts, and on the strength of the illusion that in doing so we make reasoned judgments of reality. Such reflection saves us from false diagnoses

and confirms Needham's suggestion that the impulse to oppose derives from bases deeper than reason.

Chapters Seven and Eight deal with the advocacy of opposition as an analytic term by Louis Dumont and one of his disciples, Tcherkézoff. It is characteristic of Needham to assume that others write as precisely as he does and Dumont does not stand up well to the stringent demand that his every word make sense. Tcherkézoff fares no better, as his criticism of *Right and Left* is shown to rest on a rather simple-minded misrepresentation. The dislodgement of Dumont is timely. British academics tend to love a weakness for Gallic portentousness and Needham has administered an excellent carminative.

His work over the years has a remarkable integrity. *Counterpoints*, like all his books, is full of references back to earlier arguments and demonstrations. Any reader who set out to put the present work in this wider context would be well rewarded. A good starting-point might be the inaugural lecture published in *Circumstantial Deliveries* (1981), where there is an authoritative review of the nature, value and tasks of modern anthropology. The quest from that point on is, for our generation, as revealing as Frazer's was in his, and more sound because better informed. A considerable added pleasure is Needham's prose, which is clean and precise in the classical tradition but impelled by an intellectual passion, and instinct with personal engagement in his craft.

Expounding a rope-trick

Malcolm Budd

DAVID PEARS
The False Prison: A study of the development
of Wittgenstein's philosophy
Volume One
202pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press, £19.50
(paperback, £6.95).
019824710

S. STEPHEN HILMY
The Later Wittgenstein: The emergence of a
new philosophical method
340pp. Oxford: Blackwell, £35.
063115428

The principal aim of Wittgenstein's enigmatic early work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, is to establish the limits of the expression of thought in language. The theory of language put forward in the book maintains that every proposition is a picture; each proposition is true or false according as the state of affairs it represents agrees or disagrees with reality (the facts); and it is a truth-function of so-called elementary propositions. The weight of the theory is therefore borne by these elementary propositions into which it supposes all propositions can be analysed.

According to this theory, an elementary proposition is a concatenation of simple symbols called "names", and no elementary proposition either contradicts or entails any other elementary proposition. Names are the linguistic representatives of non-composite things called "objects"; and just as names are concatenated into elementary propositions independent of one another, so objects are combined into states of affairs independent of one another. Hence the theory is a version of logical atomism.

Although the list of true elementary propositions provides a complete description of the world (the totality of facts), there is something missing from the description. For there are things that cannot be put into words, and so are not part of the world and lie beyond the limits of the expression of thought in language. A thesis to which Wittgenstein assigned cardinal importance is that these things that cannot be said can nevertheless make themselves manifest. One of them is the element of truth in

the doctrine of solipsism, the doctrine that the world is my world. We are told that this ineffable truth is manifest in the fact that the limits of my language mean the limits of my world. But since my metaphysical self is not in the world but only a limit of it, solipsism coincides with realism: my world just is the world. And if Wittgenstein's thought is not difficult enough already, it is made more obscure by the fact that the *Tractatus* ends by swallowing its own tail. For something that, according to the *Tractatus*, cannot be put into words is the theory of language apparently put into words in the *Tractatus*: the numbered propositions of which the *Tractatus* is composed are by its own standards nonsensical. Few of Wittgenstein's readers have felt able to follow his final advice to copy the Indian rope-trick he has himself performed, and to throw away the propositions after climbing up them to a position from which the world can, he assures us, be seen aright.

Any interpreter who offers to guide us through the intricate patterns of the *Tractatus* will need to have a sure grasp of a number of central issues: the precise nature of Wittgenstein's logical atomism and especially his argument that it would be impossible to express thoughts in sentences unless there were objects (in the *Tractatus* sense); the main thrust of his conception of propositions as pictures; the significance of his doctrine that there are things that cannot be said but can be shown; and (the most difficult section of the book) his treatment of solipsism. These and many other issues are explored with exceptional subtlety in the first volume of David Pears's magisterial study *The False Prison*.

This first volume, which contains the first two of the three parts that make up the work, has a rather curious structure, partly generated by the decision to publish it serially in two volumes. Although the book is primarily concerned with the interpretation of the *Tractatus*, the first third of it is devoted to a series of three sketches of Wittgenstein's thought: a bird's-eye view of its entire course; and two finer-grained pictures of the end-points, the early system and the late system. Each of these is characterized by a deep understanding of the terrain it maps; but the treatment is necessarily highly selective and will be followed with ease only by those already familiar with Wittgenstein's thought. The sketch of the later system is particularly interesting for its outline of Wittgenstein's account of sensation-language; but it is frustrating to have to wait an indefinite time for the complete picture promised for the second volume.

Pears is of course an exceptionally well-qualified guide to the *Tractatus*, for not only does he have a thorough knowledge of

Wittgenstein's writings, he is also an expert on the work of Russell that influenced the young Wittgenstein and which the *Tractatus* is both a response to and a reaction against. Starting from a illuminating contrast between the logical atomism of Russell and that of Wittgenstein, Pears proceeds to steer a middle course between two extreme interpretations of Wittgenstein's theory. On the one hand, there is the view that in the *Tractatus* objects are mental sense-data. On the other hand, there is the view that they cannot be identified with any kind of independently specifiable thing, since the *Tractatus*'s logical atomism is not based on independent references to objects. Pears argues decisively against both these views and in favour of his own interpretation: the *Tractatus* is basically realistic (its names make independent references to objects), but Wittgenstein was unsure what kinds of things objects were and so left their nature indefinite.

A different aspect of Wittgenstein's agnosticism about the nature of objects is stressed in Pears's account of the picture theory of sentences. He argues that the central point of analogy between sentences and pictures exploited by Wittgenstein is independent of whether objects should be understood as particulars or as also including properties and relations, and that although Wittgenstein allowed for the possibility that objects might include relations he was unwilling to commit himself about an issue he saw as peripheral.

Perhaps the outstanding part of Pears's book is the chapter devoted to Wittgenstein's thoughts about solipsism. The thesis of the *Tractatus* is that language has limits because anything which can be said must be a truth-function of elementary propositions that reflect combinations of objects. Solipsism attempts to narrow these limits by imposing the additional requirement that objects can be identified only from a particular point of view, the one occupied by the solipsist himself. Pears argues with great force that Wittgenstein's treatment of solipsism does not presuppose an identification of objects with private sense-data which veil the world behind them, and that in fact it is neither concerned with the nature of objects nor with the problem of other minds. Instead, it is focused upon the problem of the identity of the solipsist's subject of awareness. In a nutshell, Wittgenstein's argument is that the solipsist's point of view assumed by the solipsist is an illusion: if the solipsist is in the world, his doctrine is self-defeating; if he is not, it is empty (and no different from realism). Those who have thought they would never fully understand Wittgenstein's extraordinarily concentrated and opaque treatment of solipsism will find this

must include nearly all of us - will find it clearly laid out in Pears's sympathetic exegesis.

When Wittgenstein returned to philosophy in 1929 his approach to language underwent a remarkable change. He abandoned the leading ideas of the *Tractatus* and began to think in a strikingly different manner. The emergence of this new way of thinking is the subject of S. Stephen Hilmy's excellent *The Later Wittgenstein*, which is the first fruit of his protracted research on Wittgenstein's voluminous *Nachlass*. The way in which Wittgenstein tried to compose works for publication - through the assembly, rearrangement and progressive modification of remarks culled from his manuscripts - and the aphoristic quality of his published work give the *Nachlass* special interest: it is possible to trace the movements of his remarks in his notebooks and typescripts and render the nature and development of his ideas perspicuous.

Hilmy's aim is not to evaluate Wittgenstein's new way of thinking but to demonstrate by reference to the unpublished writings exactly what it was, when and how it took shape, and what the driving force was behind his later philosophical writings. This necessitates considerable repetition and it is no criticism of the book to say that its philosophical content is rather flat in relation to its size. On the contrary, it is made highly attractive by the large number of quotations from Wittgenstein's notebooks it contains: these communicate a vivid sense of the quality and intensity of his struggles with the problems he wrestled with for so many years. Although the picture of Wittgenstein's later way of thinking that emerges is not unfamiliar, the wealth of detail and the new emphases and interconnections it establishes make it much richer and more accurate than anything attempted before.

And there is one feature that will cause general surprise: a great deal of Wittgenstein's new approach to language and philosophy is shown to be in place only a short time after he decided to take up again the study of philosophy he had forgone a decade previously. Has there been a more sudden and impressive metamorphosis in the history of philosophy?

A Wittgenstein Bibliography, edited by V. A. and S. G. Shanker (361pp. Croom Helm, £45.00 07099 4431 4), is volume five of *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Critical Assessments*. An essay by G. H. von Wright, "The Wittgenstein Papers", is followed by a listing of the philosopher's own works; the main section of the book, "Secondary Sources", attempts to provide a complete list of all the major books, articles, critical notices and book reviews that have been published about Wittgenstein.

A satirist cut short

Pat Rogers

HAROLD F. BROOKS and RAMAN SELDEN
(Editors)
The Poems of John Oldham
592pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press, £60.
0198124562

There is a curious felicity in Dryden's phrase for John Oldham, "too little and too lately known". Oldham died in 1683, aged barely thirty, thus missing the great events of 1688 which would have been a gift to a satirist of his talent. He did not make it into Johnson's poets or the other big collections which first prescribed the canon of English verse. In the *New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* he is ranged among the "Minor poetry 1660-1700" along with men such as Halifax, Sprat and Steyne (who did earn a niche in the *Lives of the Poets*). Two-thirds of a column was enough to fill his NCBEL entry in 1971, although since that date important advances have been made in the appraisal of his work. For this the senior editor of this edition is chiefly responsible, although his collaborator Raman Selden, Rachel Trickett and Paul Hammond have kept Oldham studies from resembling a one-man industry. All the same, it is Harold Brooks who has done most to give Oldham belated recognition. *The Poems* are the crowning achievement of this enterprise - not quite the full Clarendon panoply, since the book has been set in a photographically reproduced (and unjustified) typescript. So Oldham hangs on as a bit of a second-class citizen in the republic of letters.

In his own lifetime he issued three collections together with a handful of other poems, all in the few years prior to his death. In 1684 a volume of *Remains* was published. Three hundred years have now elapsed, and there have been no significant additions to the corpus of his work. Indeed Brooks remarks blandly in the introduction that "the Oldham canon has proved to harbour no serious problems", which is at least a change from the confused situation surrounding his contemporary Rochester. Fifteen uncollected items are assembled at the end of the poems, most of them fairly slight and all previously known, though not all published before. Two poems which stand out both because of a Rochester connection and a nakedly obscene idiom are "Upon the Author of the Play call'd *Sodom*" and "Sardis spulius: An Ode". The latter is a kind of twisted Pindaric, handling the materials of heroic celebration in a vein of unremitting sardonicism. Oldham had always been a purveyor of mock-ecumenism and ironic disparage; a panegyric of the prosaic is within his best capabilities, if you are attracted to that sort of thing. It is rather a pity that his exercise in a more appalling genre, advice to a painter, runs to just seven and a half lines.

This fragment is one of a number found in the main autograph manuscript, among the Rawlinson collection in the Bodleian Library. However, the main importance of this source lies in the drafts of major poems which it contains, and which have been fastidiously sifted by the editors to provide the first reliable text of almost all the poems. Previous selections of Oldham have tended to use heavily corrupted texts, which does at least testify to the popularity of Oldham's poetry in the years following his death - his works were regularly reprinted and survived as long as poems on affairs of state constituted affairs of poetic consequence. There they were come on by Pope, among others; and it has been the goal of modern scholarship to establish a line of wit in which Oldham can be granted an honourable place.

In practice this has meant dislodging the *Satyr upon the Jesuits* and putting the emphasis on the second and third collections, where Oldham turned to translation and (the first important practitioners, apart from Boileau) imitation. The major boasts on which Oldham grafted his own stock were Horace, Juvenal and Boileau himself. This redirection of critical attention is focused in the most serious monograph on his work: Paul Hammond's *John Oldham and the Renewal of Classical Culture* (reviewed in the *TL* of April 13, 1984). Hammond even detects in Oldham and his contemporaries such as Roscommon and Sheffield a premature Augustanism, in which the

attempt of these writers "to define classical values suffered a hardening of the critical vocabulary because it was made too early, with only aspirations and no achieved literature in English to support it". Here is yet another burden of the past for poets to cope with: premeditation. As Henry James showed with Hawthorne, great writers can make bricks without much in the way of literary straw to hand. But certainly Oldham died too soon, if he did not actually start to write too soon; the increasing sophistication of his work is more than surface gloss, and had he survived until the 1720s - as was perfectly conceivable - he would have entered a climate hospitable to the learned inflexions and oblique innuendoes which he was developing.

At one point Brooks's introduction takes a parallel tack. He observes, "One excellent way of enjoying Oldham's pictures of metropolitan life, in particular his imitation of Juvenal's third satire, is to treat them as part of a series which includes scenes from Restoration com-

edy, some of Dryden's prologues, Swift's 'Description of the Morning' and 'A City Shower', Gey's *Tribe*, and Johnson's *Louisa*." The parallel is of course closest in respect of Johnson's imitation of the same satire: Boswell spotted this long ago, and devoted some paragraphs in the *Life of Johnson* to a comparison, with some unfashionable compliments for Oldham's "well chosen, and well expressed" satiric touches. Rachel Trickett has endorsed the same quality, that is Oldham's unfailing ability to find apt and precise modern referents for the ancient exempla.

As for the Swiftian link, one could point to a passage in the version of Juvenal: The moveables of *Ploradage* were a Bed For him, and his Wife, a Piss-pot by his side, A Looking-glass upon the Cupboards Head, A Comb-case, Candlestick, and Pewter-spoon, For want of Plate, with Desk to write upon: A Box without a Lid serv'd to contain Few Authors, which made up his Valence: And there his own immortal Works were laid, On which the barbarous Mice for hunger prey'd...



The tradesmen of London, c. 1647, reproduced from *The Golden Age of Europe: From Elizabeth I to the Sun King*, edited by Hugh Trevor-Roper (240pp. Thames and Hudson, £22.50. 050040168).

Prelapsarian presumption

C. H. Sisson

JAMES GRANTHAM TURNER
One Flesh: Paradisal marriage and sexual
relations in the age of Milton.
320pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press, £27.50.
0198128665

The question whether Adam and Eve had sexual intercourse before the Fall, while benefiting from a sort of divinely appointed contraception, may seem rather unreal. Such matters, however, enter largely into *One Flesh*, which is conceived as a contribution to "the history of sexuality". James Grantham Turner's stamping-ground is "the vast, ramshackle edifice of interpretation" of the Book of Genesis, and Milton's place in relationship to it. For Milton, of course, as for the seventeenth century at large, the story of Adam and Eve is part of the story which ends with *Paradise Regained*, and would have been meaningless outside that context. The word "sexuality" came into use only at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and as yet unencumbered by most of the subjective meanings it now carries.

Other times, other orientations. "A major canonical author", says Professor Turner, "is continually remade by each generation of critics within each 'interpretive community'".

an assertion which has a certain melancholy truth in it, as does Turner's admission that he has "a Whiggish desire to prove the emergence of a modern world-view". The serious alternative to the latter aberration is not, however, as he suggests, "the artificial unification of the past", but a demolition of mere interpretation in favour of an attempt, however imperfect, to recognize the face of reality. That is how Donne read the story of Adam and Eve, before Milton, ending with a feeling of "the grovelling impotence of the human mind". That is how, after Milton, Johnson read Milton.

Turner's method of inquiry is to examine some of the antecedents of Milton's view of "Paradise marriage and sexual relations". First he deals with "the Biblical era itself", then with "parallel studies of sexual feeling and sexual politics, beginning with Augustine". He moves rapidly to the Reformation and then to "the Puritans, moralists, philosophers and Radicals of Milton's life-time". The outlawing of the Book of Common Prayer, and the replacement of its sober mysticism by the Puritan arrangements, does not have the place it might have had here. The last three chapters of the seven are devoted to Milton himself - his poetics, his advocacy of divorce and "Edenic sexuality in *Paradise Lost*".

Paradise marriage is not a convincing subject, in this world, and Milton manages it better in the poem than in his writings on divorce.

Though the diction and cadence suggest *The Dunciad*, the atmosphere is much more that of Swift's domestic fables, such as *Bucca* and *Philemon*. Homeliness and squalor lack the surreal and perverse beauty they acquire in Pope. Objects retain a stubborn thinginess, and Oldham's unfailingly concrete language works most effectively in such a context - he is a master of vignettes rather than visions.

Brooks states that "of Rochester's metaphysical cast of mind Oldham had nothing", and here the evidence is to be drawn chiefly from the imitation of Boileau's eighth satire, itself the basis (much more obliquely) for Rochester's "Satyr against Monkism". Early on in this work, Oldham does briefly approach the philosophic vein of Dryden: at all events, the diction has a surface ring of Lucretian jargon, as in *Religio Laici*:

But silius Man, in his mistaken way,
By Reason, his false guide, is led astray:
Tost by a thousand gusts of wavering doubt,
His restless mind still rolls from thought to thought:
In each resolve unsteady and unfit,
And what he one day loathes, desires next.

On the whole, it is when Oldham can move from ideas to human situations that he shifts up a poetic gear, and he has the true satirist's gift of gaining in edge and lucidity as the emotional temperature rises (where the rest of us Inven control as we essay damaging invective). Even in the rougher satires on the Jesuits, there are moments of superb scorn, inventive and mouth-filling connotations, almost farcical inventories of corruption:

Should I tell you all their countless Knaveries,
Their Cheats, and Slinnings, and Forgeries, and Lies,
Their Cringings, Crossings, Censings, Sprinklings,
Chirims,
Their Conjurings, and Spells and Exorcisms;
Their motly Habits, Mantles, and Stoles,
Ails, Ammis, Rochets, Chimers, Hoods, and Cows...

The classicizing, urbane Oldham is certainly real enough, but we should not neglect a mode of contumely which looks back to the Jacobean rather than forward to Augustanism.

The massive learning embodied in the commentary has passed beyond the ken of this reviewer. Rigorous methods have been brought to bear on textual decisions of some complexity, involving both manuscripts and early printed editions. In this area a great delight is the discovery of two composers to rival those of the First Folio, whom Brooks christens with due decorum L and M. On one occasion this pair divided the setting of sheet E, finally colliding at sig E5. It is a tiny example of the minute care which Brooks has given to Oldham for fifty years, and which will find its best reward in wider appreciation of the poet whom he has done so much to restore to currency.

In the latter, he redefined "the original institution" of marriage "stringently", as Turner says, and certainly in a manner which suited the devices and desires of his own heart - now a common form of intellectual exercise. In *Paradise Lost* the full width and depth of his mind appear. In the magnificent evocations of paradisaical life that bear traces of his own unrealizable aspirations, the odds and ends of theory, from Plato to the Adam-wits, fall into place with the mass of literary and theological matter which served him as a poet, so achieving that "solid and treatable smoothness" which delights. If Milton's digestion of theory is less complete than that of Dante, to whom Adam explained that no product of human reason was made to last for ever, it was still immense.

Turner makes the point that "it is the conjunction of Eros and submission that seems to inspire the stupor authorial excitement in *Paradise Lost*". This is undoubtedly one of the keys to the erotic elements of the poem: "There appears in Milton's books", says Johnson, "something of a Turkish contempt for females, as subordinate and inferior beings." Think of his daughters, whom he "suffered to be depressed by a mean and penurious education", reading to the blind poet in languages they did not begin to understand. And these women were younger contemporaries of Madame de Sévigné.

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A spanner in the works

Adam Mars-Jones

CECELIA TICH
Shifting Gears: Technology, literature, culture in Modernist America
 311pp. University of North Carolina Press.
 £29.75.
 H0078 17155
HUGH KENNER
The Mechanic Muse
 136pp. Oxford University Press. £11.50.
 019 5041429

Cecilia Tichi takes as her subject an age in which what she calls "gear-and-girder technology", with its admiration for efficiency and its denunciations of waste, exercised a strong influence on American culture. Unfortunately her book, though well designed and abundantly illustrated, is itself as a critical study something of a waste. The author is Professor of English at Boston University, but writes most of the time like "a piece of mechanism for the accretion of details", to quote Ezra Pound's description of a mass-produced student.

A Romantic sensibility which regarded the world, its inhabitants and their literary productions as organic wholes was superseded, according to Professor Tichi, by a Minimalist sensibility which saw instead integrated systems, made up of components more or less prefabricated. No suggestion is made that the transition was a slow, complex or painful one, or that it might be possible to write a successful book in literary terms that contested the new hegemony.

Tichi discusses gear-and-girder technology very much in its own terms, admitting the force of its claims to efficiency. But efficient for whom? Wasteful of what? Tichi never asks these questions. Her only interesting suggestions are made in passing – that such thinkers as Darwin, Spencer and Comte, for instance, each in their own way emphasizing process rather than fixity, coincided with the early days

of the great process technologies (electrical power, petrol refining). Her main argument, by contrast, is endlessly redundant.

Its basic confusion comes from mistaking mechanical analogies – potent analogies, and worth exploring for their power to mislead as well as instruct – for pieces of analysis proper. But once you have decided that a poem is a "machine made of words", in William Carlos Williams's formulation, where do you go from there? Tichi claims that Williams "spoke literally" – and better yet, "sincerely" – in making that formulation. What does the poem-machine do? No engineer would use an unspecified machine for a particular task. And if a poem is a machine that makes nothing happen, is it not then simply an obsolete machine? Safer to leave Williams's formula as a metaphor.

The writers whom Tichi perceives as having fully absorbed the lessons of technology are Williams, Dos Passos and Hemingway. She does not mention, but perhaps it should be stated at some point, that these are three extraordinarily different writers, and even if they were all decisively influenced by gear-and-girder technology their reactions to it demand to be carefully charted.

Tichi makes no such attempt. In Williams's case, she asserts that he found his "path of escape" in the Efficiency Movement (also known as Scientific Management or Taylorism, after its founder Frederick Taylor), a method of streamlining and rationalizing production lines. But nowhere does Tichi quote anything that establishes that Williams had so much as heard of Taylorism. Williams to be sure was preoccupied with ideas of waste and efficiency, both as a poet trying to shed a tradition and as a young doctor with a family and only the most fleeting leisure, but that is quite a different thing. Cecilia Tichi seems to have only the vaguest idea of what constitutes literary evidence. Her other notion is that medical school taught Williams to use the moment efficiently, and to carry a notebook at all times.

When she comes to discuss the novels of Dos Passos, Tichi describes them as "marvels of integrated structure" and him as "America's engineer-novelist". There is a whiff of euphemism about this, particularly when Dos Passos's characters are described as deliberately interchangeable, the better to portray modern reality, rather than inadequately differentiated. Tichi goes into little stylistic detail. She asserts, for instance, that Dos Passos

underscores the rapid-transit age with the technique of jamming words together to suggest rapid-fire speech and instantaneous perception... In spoken language and on the printed page these breathlessly jammed words collapse time and space. They emphasize perceptual speed as a trait of the modern. To participate in twentieth-century life is to see, hear, speak, read and write fast.

Allegories of capital

Roy Rosenzweig

MICHAEL DENNING
Mechanic Accents: Dime novels and working-class culture in America
 259pp. Verso. £29.95 (paperback; £9.95).
 086091 1780

In the United States the study of popular culture has become an academic growth industry; yesterday's cultural trash pile has become the basis of today's doctoral dissertation. Often, however, such scholarship does not rise above the level of the nostalgic evocations and antiquarian catalogues of popular-culture collectors and enthusiasts. In *Mechanic Accents*, his path-breaking study of the dime novel, Michael Denning sets out with careful research and methodological sophistication to rescue the sensational fiction that flourished in America between the 1840s and the 1890s from this sort of "patronizing and patriotic nostalgia" and to situate it "not in a pastoral golden age but in the class conflicts of the gilded age" in which much of it was written and read.

Denning begins by looking at the "economies" of dime novels, the production of which he locates within an emerging "culture industry". Although he aptly borrows that term from theorists of the Frankfurt school, he wisely

rejects their notion of cultural commodities as inexorable forces of mass deception and manipulation. Instead, he presents the dime novel as a "contested terrain" in which there were "struggles both at the point of production, the writing of these dime novels; and at the point of consumption, the reading of cheap stories". Denning easily establishes the fiction factories as contested terrain by pointing out the wide range of dime novel writers (from the moralistic Horatio Alger to the populist radical George Lippard) and the even wider range of stories churned out. Although previous accounts have associated the dime novel almost exclusively with innocent tales of western pioneers, Denning shows that detectives, tramps, outlaws, mechanics, factory girls and even labour organizers figured more prominently in the pages of America's most widely read popular literature.

More difficult to pinpoint is who read these books. But by creatively stitching together the scraps of evidence he has gathered from scattered sources, Denning convincingly shows that young workers dominated the dime novel audience. What did these working-class readers make of these novels? How did they interpret them? Denning takes up these questions in the longer, and much denser, second half of his book, which is devoted to what he calls "the poetics" of the dime novel. In brief, he argues

that's an awful lot to deduce from the omission of the hyphen in "plum-colored" and of the space in "talcum powder" (two of Tichi's examples). If you can do all that with the spelling of compound words, there seems no great call for a novel. Punctuation will suffice to delineate the modern world.

The actual weakness of Tichi's argument for any machine-age efficiency in Dos Passos is shown up in her closing passage: "He built volume after volume, stopping U.S.A. when it became a trilogy – stopping, but not ending. Implicitly the novel-building by the self-styled 'architect of history' could go on and on."

What kind of integrated structure is it that can be extended indefinitely without changing its function? A sausage perhaps. A marvel of integrated sausage.

In her discussion of Hemingway, Tichi is at her weakest. Her glosses seem embarrassed, even desperate. She quotes Hemingway on writing, and continues with points of her own: "All you have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know... and then go on from there." Critics have found that the phrase on the "one true sentence" succeeding itself lies at the heart of Hemingway's method. In fact, the "one true sentence" is Hemingway's structural component of fiction. In a volume retitling at £29.75 you could reasonably expect platitudes with more pretension.

Tichi has a poor record of recognizing metaphorical language even when it is she who is using it. She quotes a paragraph on fishing from the story "The End of Something" and comments, "The visual composition here is minimalist, formed of two angled lines, those of the rod and the filament..." But a paragraph of prose is not a visual composition at all, except in the sense that words on paper are given a particular arrangement. And what sort of efficiency does the story show, if it is as much like a painting as like a machine? The term "minimalist" has problems of its own. Minimalism works not by removing unnecessary elements but necessary ones – as previously defined – and not in the interests of mechanical efficiency but in a provocative refusal of fullness.

Tichi's model of fiction cannot accommodate such sophistication, nor describe what happens when obvious emotional cues are withheld. Faced with Hemingway's scrupulous descriptions of manual tasks, which clearly have a resonance beyond the physical, she notes only that "these and similar passages make 'Big Two-Hearted River' a camper's guidebook". Why then is it categorized and shelved as fiction? She wisely omits any reference to Hemingway's belief that the most efficient part of a story, the part that does the most work, is the part that the author has omitted,

since she could hardly point to any actual machine with the same cunning feature. She might then be forced to admit that mechanical analogies for literature can take you only so far, and not nearly as far as 300 pages.

Hugh Kenner's *The Mechanic Muse* is a collection of essays based on lectures given at the 92nd Street Y in New York. They are little critical lyrics, worthy tailpieces to his epic *The Pound Era*. Kenner is faithful both to the texts and to the conditions of the writers' lives; he has an acute sense of the fragility of Modernism's classic works, now that the details they took for granted need explication. The books are "complex artefacts" that we need to "take apart for maintenance".

Kenner's tone is suitably unbuttoned; here, for example, to "Sam Beckett", to Mr Spock of *Star Trek*, to Hugh Hefner. Perhaps because of the restrictions of lecture format, he concentrates on early and sometimes minor work. His essays drift rather than drive to their conclusions, and at their least consequential have a certain tentativeness. Kenner analyses Pound's 1912 "The Return" as a poem "that could only have been composed on the typewriter", giving no weight to its archaisms ("Gods of the winged shoe" and so on), which greatly outnumber its innovations. He is good none the less at detecting innovation in disguise; he points out, for instance, that a dictionary is in its own way a machine, since it concentrates the work of many specialists into a form that anyone can use. He has a sharp eye for the subtle social changes brought about by technology, changes that only the keenest observers noticed at the time.

The essay "Joyce Scrivening" is a typically mellow performance, starting with observations about Dublin's electric tram system – in 1904 the world's most extensive – and its surviving influence on metropolitan life ("Dublin is still a city where getting a telephone can take two years, but the power department's emergency crew will tumble into overalls at 2 a.m. at word of an outage"). Kenner discourses further on Dublin buses, made by the power department's emergency crew and watched over by them for months before being filled in; then on Dublin chat, around such holes and elsewhere.

After the essay proper, Kenner returns, with all the auvity of Alastair Cooke easing into the last paragraph of a *Letter from America*, to those holes and the men who watch over them. He sees in the anomalous occupation of hole-watching a resemblance to his own as an expert in James Joyce studies. Here he is being altogether too modest. As long as Hugh Kenner is on the job, the holes that the great Modernists left in their texts will not be filled in by mistake, and the artefacts of the great innovators will be scrupulously maintained.

that although these popular stories contain conflicting voices, they bear the particular imprint and concern of their working-class readers. But we can only hear those "mechanic accents". If we follow the allegorical mode of reading practised by those readers. Hence, Denning claims that "working-class readers may well have read" even the seemingly innocent dime novel westerns "as stories of labor and capital, taking the west as an allegorical republic of outlaws, forming a cooperative commonwealth".

As Denning admits, such an interpretation of the dime novel remains hypothetical. Still, his speculation is informed by close reading of a wide selection of the dime novels themselves and by a critical and creative use of Marxist literary theory. Indeed, one wishes that he had taken his speculation a step further. Although he promises to plumb the dime novel for new insights into working-class culture and ideology, he too readily accepts the now conventional wisdom of a nineteenth-century working-class culture centred on "artisan Republican" values. Yet his own evidence of the epitaphic and multi-vocal narratives found in this particular genre might lead us to wonder whether nineteenth-century working-class culture (and perhaps working-class reading) was not more complex, contradictory and multi-voiced than he seems at times to suggest.

Continued from page 1349

critic will say that their relative status has been properly fixed by our assessment of their power to handle language, but other factors counted for more at the outset. Southey possessed non-canonical qualities – he was contented rather than reassuring, common rather than genteel, provincial rather than metropolitan, international rather than national. And he was no solitary or reclusive, amenable to study out of context, as the more favoured Wordsworth and Keats were; he engaged actively with his contemporaries, and they with him. I think it will begin to seem more natural to us in the future to replace the old thin line of national heroes with a richer and more credible notion: that writers represent groups and attitudes within the community, and therefore from time to time come dynamically into contention with one another. Southey's restoration to the Romantics at once makes them look more like a real group. They can be examined for evidence of how a strong movement of poetry – that most exalted and eloquent form of social intercommunication – actually works.

Southey was a Bristolian, and a provincial patriot. Like the Bristol poet of the previous generation, Thomas Chatterton, he believed in popular and local cultural traditions. He was a more conventional scholar than Chatterton, meaning that he did not invent documentary evidence for the existence of these traditions. He contented himself with reanimating them for his own times, publishing imitations of ballads under his own name in 1797 and 1799. Some were of the medieval type, often comic or lightly satirized; others used the still-current broadside ballad convention of commenting on public affairs. It was because Southey's friendship with Coleridge was common knowledge that Francis Jeffrey could damn the *Lyrical Ballads* and Wordsworth, by association, as disaffected.

Southey was also fascinated by the wider world with which Bristol traded, and by the European diaspora into East and West. While still at school in the 1780s, he said he was going to write a poem in the manner of the mythology of every major religious system. The first to appear, and my example of the marginalized writing we have lost – another poem to read, calling on other ways of reading – is the Islamic romance *Thalaba* (1801). The nearest model to this poem in Western literature would be the fanciful, magical Renaissance epics of Ariosto, Tasso and Spenser, surprisingly courtly models for the faintly acerbic balladeer. On closer inspection, Southey's vulgar materials are still there – *Thalaba* is a cunning anthology of good stories from East and West, old books and travellers' tales. Later editions sometimes drop the often comic or scurrilous notes, and then the poem looks altogether more elevated and respectable, an allegorical tale about a knight's journey to find and do battle with the powers of evil. But I give you the original, unexpurgated version, not the one which accommodated Victorian taste.

Thalaba begins, somewhere in Arabia, with a murder. The victim is Hodeirah, surprised and slaughtered while sleeping in his tent along with most of his children, though his wife and one young son, Thalaba, manage to escape. The murderers are a band of wicked magicians whom we meet next in their underworld kingdom, Dondaniel. By means of some explicit, bloodthirsty and compulsively readable black magic, they find out that their attack has been only partially successful: they must trace Thalaba and kill him, or he is destined to destroy them. It is a familiar enough plot to those who know *Macbeth*. Meanwhile Thalaba, by now also motherless, is adopted by a virtuous Bedouin, Moath. He grows up a simple nomad and herdsman, a preparation, like Abraham's and Muhammad's, for a life of exemplary religious heroism.

By the fourth book *Thalaba* is old enough to go out in search of his father's enemies, who are equally keen to find him. The middle part of the poem shows him being tested in a series of discrete stories, all of which must put the reader in mind of other narratives out of the whole course of symbolic and fantastic literature: high and low; he is tempted in the desert; he journeys to the gates of the Underworld; he visits an apparent paradise of pleasure and death which he sees through as a worldly fake; and so on.

valley created by the enchanter Alaodin, Thalaba rescues his foster-sister Oneiza. When the two are welcomed and rewarded by a neighbouring king, Thalaba, forgetting his quest, seizes the opportunity to marry. Against Oneiza's advice, he invites guests to the wedding party. That night Azrael, the Angel of Death, visits the house and takes the bride.

Something very like this fatal wedding party occurs in two later Romantic works, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Keats's *Lamia*. Equally, the visit to the Underworld two books earlier rings a bell: we know it from remarkably similar journeys through underground caverns in later prose fantasies like George MacDonald's in the late nineteenth century, or J. R. R. Tolkien's in the twentieth. These are examples of Southey's extraordinary intertextual range, his *ut videtur* – in the strict sense that he's both thoroughly absorbed with popular art, and himself the medium by which traditional stories make their way down into the cultural water-table, to spring up oddly in (say) the pages of Rider Haggard's *She or King Solomon's Mines*, or in other popular locations. Thalaba goes mad when he thinks his dead wife, Oneiza, is coming back each night to haunt him with failure. The apparition is exposed as a vampire, who can be killed only by driving a stake through her heart. Many a Victorian shocker, culminating in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, can trace its genealogy back to this episode via Byron, who first used it, sensationally, in his poem *The Ginoir*, with acknowledgements in the notes to Southey.

Released in Book Eight from the last of his worldly ties, Thalaba sets off into wintry landscapes, a high, cold and pure terrain which matches his new ascetic frame of mind. The journey into cold places contains the best scenes in the poem – best of all, a marvellous little folk-tale which begins when he comes frozen to a cave to find an old woman spinning in the light of her fire:

The pine boughs they blazed cheerfully,
 And her face was bright with the flame;
 Her face was as a diamond's face,
 And yet her hair was grey,
 She bade him welcome with a smile,
 And still continued spinning,
 And singing as she spun.
 The thread the woman drew
 Was finer than the silkworm's,
 Was finer than the gossamer;
 The song she sung was low and sweet,
 And Thalaba knew not the words...
 The youth sat watching it [the thread]
 And she beheld his wonder,
 And then again she spoke,
 And still he found his hands I say,
 Now twice it round thy hands I pray,
 My thread is small, my thread is fine,
 But he must be
 A stronger, bolder thee,
 Who can break this thread of mine!"

And up she raised her bright blue eyes,
 And sweetly she smiled at him,
 And he conceiv'd no ill...
 And up she raised her bright blue eyes,
 And sweetly she smiled at him,
 "I thank thee, I thank thee, Hodeirah's son!
 I thank thee for doing what can't be undone,
 For blinding thyself in the chain I have spun!"

[*Thalaba*, 1801, VIII, pp 89-92]

Southey's experimental metres can be troublesome in narrative. But they come into their own here, and in the incantatory curse in his *Curse of Keham*. These are two passages where the inspiration is the charm, a particularly simple type of English folk verse. Partly because the metre sounds authentic, this scene, and its grisly sequel, where the witch Maimuna's horrific sister appears, become believable on their own terms. They even evoke the uncanny, a rare achievement in eighteenth-century poetry.

After his escape from Maimuna the witch, by a mechanism of plot I would not dream of giving away, Thalaba eventually finds a little giving away, with another mysterious woman at the helm, to which he travels down a stream, which becomes a river, and finally a great sea. It is, as that allegory in poem after poem. At the end of his journey Thalaba makes his own way down into the caverna of Dondaniel, the kingdom at the roots of the ocean – which, Semson-like, he brings down on his own head and on the heads of his enemies.

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unidentified minds have intervened in the story we have. The Mariner, presumably illiterate, must have told it early in the sixteenth century. Someone who heard it, other than the Wedding Guest, wrote it down, an linguistic evidence not much later. A much more learned editor added marginal glosses at least a century after that, and thus the academic discourse of Jeremy Taylor's day inserts itself into the popular narrative. Changes Coleridge made to his poem over nearly twenty years confirm its suggestive appearance, as a text submitting to change, a witness to the processes of history.

This marked, sophisticated interest in a text's own material nature was highly typical of the later eighteenth century. Less predictable was Coleridge's attitude to the transmission of cultural artefacts, his acceptance of all contributions as *natural* – for this evidently seemed new and displeasing to Southey, his former partner and senior colleague in the field of folk culture. The story follows the path simple seamen alive in 1500 would have imagined for it: divine retribution follows the slaying of the albatross. Neutrals, the hermit and the pilot, see the arrival of the ship sailed by the ghostly crew. The more sophisticated seventeenth-century additions do nothing to demystify the mariner's oral version, but on the contrary plausibly affirm what is, in fact, a smoothly evolving record of folk, the "panharmonium" of the universal church in which Coleridge believed. He is initiating in smaller compass the construction of the greatest sacred text, the Bible, by many witnesses in different places in different times. By omitting the *hostile* textual criticism of the Bible and other sacred texts in the *philosophic* tradition, he seems to endorse Burke's attack on French revolutionary ideologies and their British sympathizers: modern sceptics may not validly reinterpret these events, these experiences, this customary understanding. Coleridge denies that possibility Southey envisages in *Thalaba*, of a break in the hermeneutic circle of believers, or a break-out from preconditioned mentalities.

Thalaba, one of the first Romantic poems to narrate a spiritual quest, is also a critique of such quests. Though *The Ancient Mariner* is the deliberately revivalist romance with which Southey openly takes issue, implicitly he also has much to say in Wordsworth, whose *Prelude* is nowadays hailed as the greatest of all Romantic quest poems. Wordsworth's first version of his autobiography was written in two books in 1799: here Wordsworth is preoccupied with boyhood experiences, and with his growth, guided by Nature, into consciousness and conscience. Two years later, *Thalaba* appeared, a strong poetic representation of an entire life: two years after that, in 1803, Southey moved to the Lake District and became for the first time Wordsworth's regular associate. Wordsworth did not say that he found *Thalaba* exemplary, and was unlikely to do so after Jeffrey had termed him a mere follower in Southey's sect. Yet by 1815 he has changed *The Prelude* so that, for the first time, he as its simple country-born protagonist lives through a full epic action, beginning with the worldly temptations of Cambridge, descending to the hell-on-earth of London, and ending with a visionary experience on a mountain-top. This, the least well-documented of *Thalaba*'s intertextual relations, is potentially the most notable.

The one fully acknowledged great disciple of Southey was Shelley, who claimed to know large parts of *Thalaba* and *Kehama* by heart from his schooldays. In 1812 Shelley, then twenty, visited Southey in the Lakes, and was disappointed to find that the author of *Thalaba* had dwindled into a mere ex-radical. For Shelley's poetry disillusionment came too late. Again and again, his favourite devices, his allegorical journeys and mythological landscapes, plainly derive from Southey. *The Witch of Atlas*, a late poem written in 1820, uses a firelit cave where the witch spins, a voyage in a supernatural boat and another through the air in a car, all features so stamped with Shelley's signature that few nowadays think of them as

first Southey's. They are images usable by both poets because they suit their favourite allegorical plot, the journey as metaphor both for a single life and for human progress.

But Shelley's early poetry also reverts to the defection of a man who in 1813 became Poet Laureate. *Queen Mab*, *The Revolt of Islam*, and especially *Alastor* (1816) assail *Thalaba* and *The Curse of Kehama* as directly as *Thalaba* contends with *The Ancient Mariner*. *Alastor* is Shelley's ironic "collective biography" of the Lake poets, who had so grievously disappointed him in the last two years by their published rejoicings over the defeat of France. In the prose Preface to *Alastor* and in its final verse paragraph Shelley foregrounds Wordsworth among his targets by quoting him. Otherwise the poem looks towards Southey, since it impressionistically repeats the plot of *Thalaba*. Shelley's protagonist, a self-proclaimed "visionary", begins by scrambling among Gothic horrors. He sets off, leaving an Arab maiden who loves him, to fulfil a high, celibate destiny. He struggles onwards and upwards into arid, cold places, assisted at one point by a magic boat, which Mary Shelley in her *Posthumous Works* of Shelley says is from *Thalaba*. But there is no achievement, no consummation, in Shelley's version of the quest, because he equates the turning-point of the plot of *Thalaba*, the moment when *Thalaba* turns away from the memory of his dead bride to go up into the mountains, with the abandonment of human ties and of worldly goals (such as revolution). Deluded from first to last, Shelley's Poet, his parodic *Thalaba*, dies among the rocks.

Southey's great antagonist and greatest debtor is Byron, who made his name using Southey's form, the annotated narrative poem; his setting, in the Middle East; and his implied subject-matter, which Byron along with Shelley and Tom Moore, as author of *Lalla Rookh*, understood very well. It is Southey who gives the younger Romantics their great theme: the empires of the world and their imagined overthrow, picturesquely rendered. Byron often takes scenes and ideas from *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), in which Southey gives a violently unfavourable account of Hinduism. The two opening scenes of this poem must be the most frequently repeated scenes in Romantic literature. In the first book, the two young widows of an evil Hindu prince are burnt alive on his funeral pyre; in the second, the rajah Kehama condemns a peasant to a frightful punishment, eternal life during which his heart will burn for ever. Southey's point is that Hinduism is a cruel, politicized religion, the tool of hereditary rulers. When Byron and Shelley parody these scenes, they lay the guilt for the cruelty and despotism at the door of Christians, as highly placed as possible. God the Father curses the Wandering Jew in *Queen Mab*, our mother Eve quotes Southey's very words to curse her son in *Cain*.

Southey would have been of value to Byron and Shelley merely as the villain they set him up to be – the turncoat who became the Establishment's official poet. Partly because Southey's scenic skills invite plagiarism and parody, their poems are implicated with his or with no other poet's. But the relationship with Southey is most interesting for being visibly vexatious to the younger poets. While Southey becomes a supporter of government, especially over the preservation of order in India and at home, he also remains a populist. The hero and heroine of *The Curse of Kehama*, a Hindu peasant and his daughter, recall *Thalaba* the herdsman, and the two protagonists of Southey's revolutionary youth, Wai Tyler and Jann of Arc. Byron and Shelley reacted adversely to the Hindu epic because they thought it justified British empire-building. But Southey's representation of society within India might be construed as humanitarian, egalitarian and radical: it is the Indian peasants, not the gods, and not "liberators" from overseas, who challenge and overthrow the "Brahminical" old order.

Shelley and Byron, who are keen through their poetry to promote revolution abroad, say less about it at home. They seem to have the aristocratic reluctance to admit vulgar people into heroic stories and into poetry, even as revolutionaries. Byron, whose imagined up-

Europeans, at the head of these skirmishes, men of mysterious origins who could by common fictional convention turn out to be princes in disguise. And though Byron puts patriotic songs into his longer poems, and even casts part of *The Giaour* as a tavern tale, he does not imitate vulgar verse-forms, or let his voice drop to the lower registers of culture.

The recent American Romanticist orthodoxy declares the great Romantic topic to be the alienated individual consciousness; the great work, Wordsworth's *Prelude*, that autobiography of a post-revolutionary recluse. As we have seen, this makes Romanticism specially and newly relevant to displaced academics, experiencing alienation from American society, and perhaps expending it from British society as read through literature. The impulse of such critics to exalt a few words extravagantly is often justified as the effort to teach the young that there are values higher than those taught by a crass commercial culture. The innovations of the Romantics indeed amount, for M. H. Abrams, to a "displaced theology". But the heroic ideal being extracted from Romantic poetry – the way of the literate recluse – is far too privileged and (dare one suggest) too professionally interested, to seem truly universal. It needs not only supplementing, with forms of poetry and novels that are serious and intelligent without so often being private or academic.

Literature lives by seeming to express the experiences and interests of its readers. Romantic poets convey alienation (some of the time), but they also treat group and national experience in what was already, recognizably, the modern world. They deal with social change – with the need for it, or with its costs: they weigh religious explanations of the past against scientific explanations; they prophesy the future. Blake, Southey, Byron and Shelley are conscious internationalists. Wordsworth on the other hand is an English patriot, and Keats tactically avoids geographical precision, in a world recently so fought over that place-names have political implications. If *Thalaba* and *Kehama* were to be acknowledged as texts the group itself took to be central, the allegorical plot they share with *The Prelude* would be seen to have other, less private implications. The purposeful journey could equally well be read as characteristically signifying revolution, its re-enactments, its threatened return. But after Southey the location of the coming struggles shifts from Europe into the empires of the East – empires then ruled, in real life, by decaying Turkey and expansive Britain. Exotic Romanticism, so-called escapist Romanticism, the forays into the Third World which the academic consensus has so long deemed marginal, may prove to have a place (in current educational parlance) at the core of our subject after all.

Some literary relationships are marvelously nuanced; it's the glory of twentieth-century criticism to have uncovered them. Others, flagrant, parodic, contentious, were meant to be read in the public sphere, and these, paradoxically, have become almost too large to see. Southey's relations with his contemporaries were of the latter kind. But his significance can also be defended quite decorously in terms of the canon we have grown used to studying, if I have persuaded you that several of the best-regarded poems of mainstream Romanticism interrelate so significantly with *Thalaba* and with *Kehama* that they are better read with them than without them.

The key to these relations with major contemporaries lies in Southey's populism, which I've called his "vulgarity". That persistent concern with the common embarrassed other poets before it embarrassed the canon-builders; and it seems no advantage to us now to spare great writers from those who in life asked them the best questions. "Others oblige our question", said Matthew Arnold to Shakespeare, meaning by others the remaining major poets, who had not quite become objects of passive adoration, needing mere explication. It helps our modern questioning if we stand ready to readmit to the canon the little sects of dissenters, the awkward squad.

This is a version of Marilyn Butler's inaugural lecture as King Edward VII Professor of English Literature at the University of Cambridge, delivered on November 16.

Popular perspectives

Carol Ann Duffy

JOHN FOSTER (Editor)

New Angles

Book 1

128pp. 0 19 8331619

Book 2

128pp. 0 19 8331657

Oxford University Press. Paperback. £2.95 each.

New Angles, John Foster's two-volume poetry anthology for thirteen to sixteen-year-olds, consists entirely of work by living writers which jostles among lively photographs, illustrations and cartoons designed to complement the meanings of the poems and give a leg-up to the imagination. Book 1 is clearly for the younger end of the age-group, opening with a group of poems on growing up and adolescence whose language is contemporary, often streetwise, and is certainly spoken by the teenagers at whom the series is aimed. John Agard's "Hair-style" is the type of poem which will appeal to the average third-former, and is followed by Kit Wright's hairdressing daydream, which is typical of his effortless handling of rhyme and rhythm. Teachers searching for ways to make poetry popular in the classroom will find poems and themes threading naturally together: from Alan Brownjohn's "You'll See" ("you'll grow into it"), through pop, romance,

the natural world, sport, the emotions, machines and money, to the group of low-key philosophical poems which conclude with John Loveday's "Children's Questions" ("How do we know", the little girl asked, "that / we're not dreaming all this?").

If some verse appears to have been included because it has a bright idea, though clad in drab writing, this is balanced by poems which attract on every level. Ted Hughes's "Tractor" ("cast-iron cow-shit"), Keith Bosley's beautiful "The Silence Lesson" (after Karpowicz) and Elizabeth Jennings's "Absence" will hold any child's imagination after they have been drawn in by the poems by Roger McGough and Ian McMillan. Both books contain a smattering of poems in dialect. Valerie Bloom is the best represented here; but, sadly, there is only one poem from the excellent Scots poet, Tom Leonard: "If / a toktabout / thi trooth / lik wanna yoo / scruff ly; / widny think / i wuz troo; / jist wanna yoo / scruff tokn." The editor is keen to show young people that poetry does not have to be written in some form of alienating "poetic" language, and a few more dialect poems would have been welcome.

New Angles, Book 2 seems darker and deeper in content. There are fewer laughs; the poems are inviting the reader in, rather than rushing out to say hello. The book begins not with the "I" of adolescence, but with poems about other people, family relationships, the elderly. Vicki Feaver's "Children" is a fresh,

honest poem on parenthood – a good example of the editor's habit of nudging the reader to view subjects from different perspectives – although it is disappointing not to find Iain Crichton Smith's "Old Woman" ("The Old Age Pensioners", she said / "are to be granted an extra pound. / It was stated by the Government."); Carol Rumens's sestina, "Rules For Beginners", an ingenious handling of words like "disco" and "O level"; and Helen Dunmore's "Greenham Common" are three instances of topicality. Elsewhere, break-dancing, Beirut, the Falklands, unemployment, the nuclear issue, prejudice and ancestry are the concerns of many different voices.

A series which contains a tough lyric by the pop-group UB40 alongside the equally, but differently, tough verse of the Poet Laureate offers surprise and excitement. Although a few poems have been much anthologized, most of them are new and all have something to offer, from an easy laugh to Breton's test for a marvellous poem, "a cold wind brushing the tennises", as a class book for the comprehensive system. New Angles can hardly be faulted; although a copy of *The Rattle Bag* in the school library would be a good idea for the young student who is moving even further away from Peter Mortimer's "Charlie Fook": "see, I'm bloody useless, I haven't a clue / Words don't make sense to me. What can I do?"

Streetwise and simple

Connie Bensley

ANGELA HUTH (Editor)

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128pp. Orchard. £8.95.

1 85132 062 8

Angela Huth solicited new poems for this anthology from contemporary poets, and many responded – Ted Hughes, Seamus Heaney, Roy Fuller, Peter Levi among them. Other contributors are occasional poets, both eminent and unknown. The book claims to have something good to offer children of all ages and the range of subject-matter and style is certainly diverse – from jolly nursery-rhyme rongs to reflections on war. Jane Ray's illustration of tropical scenes on the jacket is marvellously vivid, as are the black-and-white line drawings which decorate the text.

Wendy Cope delivers a shock on page thirteen with her version of Christopher Robin: "Go on Mummy, it's only ten – / I want to watch *Dracula's Bride* again. / It's ever so good when he bites ladies' necks – / Me and my teddy like violence and sex." What age of child is that intended for? Certainly one with a good deal of

street credibility, like Nigel Gray's *Fred*: "I haven't got a dad. / But I'm not sad. / I live with my mum. / My mum's got a boyfriend / – he's real good fun." But we are soon back into more traditional territory, with, for example, Roger Woddis's rhythmic piece "I Bet You Didn't Know That":

When elephants look in a mirror
They feel so disgustingly fat.
They put on their trunks and go jogging.
I bet you didn't know that . . .

The Caribbean poems have some catchy rhythms too, and James Berry provides a handy translation of his: "Noh meks sunhot turn ya dry" ("Don't let the sun's heat turn you dry").

The title poem is a metaphorical narrative in free verse by George Mackay Brown about the failure of the world to live in peace; and this is not the only poem to touch on missiles or nuclear fall-out. Nor is death shirked as a subject; there are two poems about the death of a grandmother.

Of course there are animals and birds in profusion. Kingsley Amis claims that his cat speaks to him; P. J. Kavanagh watches gulls on a cliff (standing well back from the crumbly edge, he sensibly adds); and John Heath-Stubbs, imagining himself a woodlouse, echoes

the thoughts of many of us: "I would roll into a ball / When people came to call / And then they would leave me alone." Hens get rather dubious treatment – the Poet Laureate has a hen with a red-rimmed stare who is extremely bored:

Wish? Wish? What shall she wish for?
Stealthy fingers
Under her bum
An egg on your dish.

And Miles Kington contributes a poem which I should not much like to read to a child just dropping off to sleep, about a frozen chicken with its giblets attached to it in a bag, but not including its brains because – "It's just not worth preserving / Its tiny little mind". Among the most attractive items is a group of poems by Richard Edwards, full of life, rhyme and humour, which includes the story of James, the brave carrot who refused to be pulled out of bed and cooked, chopped and buttered.

It is true that *Island of the Children* has something to offer children of all ages – but this is inevitably means that many of the poems are too difficult for the young children and some too much for the older ones. It would be a good choice for a school library, a large family, or for a child whose age you have completely forgotten.

the rhyming wisdom of the helpful farmhand Harry. The sounds rise in outside curly letters up the page. Richard Hughes's "The Elephant's Picnic" is another invitation to let the imagination run riot. An elephant and a kangaroo have heard that if you go camping you build a fire and boil the kettle for tea. They wait a day and a night until the kettle is tender enough to eat. There's a fantasy also in the Polish folk tale, "The Hole in the Sky", retold here by Cecil Niteckha the tailor, looking like a character out of *The Wizard of Oz* and embarked on a similar unconscious pilgrimage to happiness, sings conscious hymns which cause a house of wickedness to vanish, then stitches up the sky to stop the rain falling on a brave town in mourning. In classic fashion, fantasy harmonizes inclination and fashion, and portrays a glorious way to make virtue and portrays like the ooe in Virginia Hamilton's, "A Wolf and Little Daughter". Hamilton's "A Wolf and Little Daughter" make up songs to save their lives, while a good boy similarly menaced in Joseph Jacob's "Mr. Miaccio" finds he has wit enough to help himself.

Adult readers will be pleased by the degree to which imagination is the subject as well as the substance of these tales. An Indian story with the theme of "the boy who cried wolf", Partap Sharma's "Ghabru and the Little Lie", explores the fear not of being eaten alive but of losing one's spirit to another living form. Generally these are stories about coming alive in mind and body and staying that way through the usual assortment of grief, danger and other people's disbelief. Cecil has found tales that have the comfortable feel of years of telling and owe their magic to their poetic wearability. "Micky and the Macaroni" is a chant based on fairy-tale causality, a dance, a song, a repeated lesson, a ritual eating up of supper:

Then his mother called out to the stick in the corner.
"Stick, stick, beat Micky. Micky won't eat his macaroni."
"The stick said no need. So she cried, "Fire, fire!"
Then, turn stick, stick won't beat Micky. Micky won't eat his macaroni.

Emma Chichester-Clark, making her debut as a children's illustrator, has brought an energetic and unsentimental brush to very varied material. On the verbal side there's plenty of roaring and moaning and rhyming and moping to be rehearsed. Laura Cecil insists on the parent as actor and her brief introduction is encouraging:

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J. H. C. Leach TLS 8th August 1986

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On the trail of Conan Doyle

One hundred years to the month after the publication of *A Study in Scarlet*, its hero's exploits are still re-enacted throughout the world. To many enthusiasts, indeed, Sherlock Holmes seems more lifelike than his creator. Next week *The Times* talks to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's daughter about the great man's legacy

... and regularly in *The Times*, Bernard Levin on the way we live now, David Miller on sport, Jane MacQuitty on wine, Geoffrey Smith on politics, Shona Crawford Poole on travel, Clifford Longley on the Church, Philip Howard on words, the unique *Times* crossword . . . and a new daily game to test your vocabulary: Word-watching



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A lion among paper tigers (25p)

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